COMIC BOOKS

COMICS FEATURE™

SNEAK PEEK
JOHN BUSCEMA'S FANTASTIC FOUR PENCILS!!!

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AFTER BYRNE—
THE FUTURE OF THE
Fantastic Four
EXCLUSIVE REPORT

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DAREDEVIL
—ROY THOMAS UNLEASHES—
SUPERMAN AT WAR
—RON GOULART ON ALEX RAYMOND'S
JUNGLE JIM
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—CLASSIC HANNA BARBERA RETURNS—
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Plus the latest news, investment tips, Consumer's Guide and more!!!

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HAPPY HAL'S HOWLINGS

This is one of those times Ol' Happy Hal gets to say, "I tol' ya so!" and it feels good. The last time I got to say that was, well when was that last time? Oh yes, when I tried to tell that guy that got Isabella to hock her jewels just where he had arrived and what promises he could make back home. But he wouldn't listen and went home to unhappily explain things to Ferdinand.

This time it concerns some solid changes in the comic book marketplace (more details can be found in "A Marketplace in Turmoil" in the news section) and some advice I offered to the industry, without invitation, some years ago. Within the pages of this very magazine, I pointed out that if independent publishers wanted to really compete with the big boys and attract a major audience, they would have to break out of the straightjacket of "direct sales" only. Now several companies are finally starting to take steps in that direction. My reasoning was, and still is, that there are just as many readers of comic books that never set foot inside of a comic shop as make regular visits to one.

Of even greater importance, there are loads of people outside of the comic book stores that are interested in things other than caped and cowled superheroes. Fans of sci fi, westerns, mysteries, war tales, romance and drama rarely enter the haven of the superpowered, longjohned crusader, the comic book specialty store. But they do visit bookstores and newsdealers. If independent publishers, as they like to call themselves, wish to cater to these people and not just produce the usual four color fare, and that is what they claim motivates them, then they must reach this market.

Now things are finally beginning to happen. Comico is launching their titles in a big way with serious national distribution—although they should be very careful of the particular distributor they chose—and Gladstone is following suit. Certainly comic books based on popular tv cartoons such as Jonny Quest and Robotech or the Disney characters should find a ready reception. Even First Comics is testing the waters in a limited way, experimenting with a few select markets under the excellent care of the people at the Charles Levy Distribution Co.

Several years ago, **COMICS FEATURE** made the leap out into the big world. Today over 80 percent of our sales are outside of the direct market. I would like to extend a helping hand and a warm welcome as other members of the specialty publishing community join us.

One last word. None of this should be construed as being negative about the many, many talented people who operate the specialty shops or the distributors that make up IADD. I helped found that organization and draft its constitution, and I honestly believe that without their very professional work there would be no comic books today. They are a vital and essential force in the development of four color fantasies. But, it is nice to know that the many readers who are unable to shop at a specialty store will be able to obtain more of the finest comic books being published today. It should certainly help keep Marvel and DC on their toes!

—Happy Hal

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THE FANTASTIC FOUR AFTER BYRNE

John Byrne is a hard act to follow. And Marvel Comics knows it. The Fantastic Four are among the most popular comic book characters of all time, in fact they are the very characters that launched the modern age of Marvel Comics. Roger Stern and John Buscema are two of the top talents working in the industry today. Stern has written many of Marvel's top books while Buscema has more years of excellent artistry under his belt than virtually anyone working in the field today. But can the two mesh well enough with the classic characters to follow in the footsteps of fandom's favorite wonderboy? James Van Hise interviewed the writer, the artist and the editor to learn what the future holds in store for the World's Greatest Comic Book Magazine. And it may be a bright tomorrow after all! Plus a special chat with John Buscema about his work.

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ROGER STERN ON THE FANTASTIC FOUR

In an exclusive preview for **COMICS FEATURE**, new writer Roger Stern reveals how he views each of the characters. Plus a look at the pencils of John Buscema.

COVER ART BY MARTIN CANNON
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FEATURE NEWS

MARKETPLACE IN TURMOIL!

The two marketplaces for comic books are very much places in flux these days. Who will be selling what where is an open question for speculation. The traditional sales path for comic books has long been the myriad independent wholesalers who sell them to everyone from newsstands to bookstores to supermarkets and convenience stores. The '70s witnessed the growth of the direct sales or comic book specialty market wholesalers whose primary customers are the comic book stores. Then, building on this new marketplace, publishers emerged in the '80s that produced full color comics for sales only through the specialty market to the comic shops. That is all history.

Now things are changing. While several comic book specialty publishers, including Comico, Gladstone and First Comics, have announced that they are going to enter the ID comic book or mass sales distribution system, the wholesalers in that very system are meeting over whether to continue carrying any comic books in the future. And that decision would include the elimination of DC, Archie and Marvel comics. It seems that the wholesalers are not happy. For years they have complained about the low profits of selling comic books and insisted that they only did it as a service, to their customers, to the publishers, to readers, to the First Amendment—a service to someone other than themselves. Taking them at their word, Marvel and DC began to explore alternative sales avenues, first the direct market sales system and then direct sales to major bookstore chains such as Waldenbooks and B. Dalton's. But that has made the wholesalers angry.

One of their major profit areas, "the sophisticates"/"skins"—porn to the uninitiated—are in jeopardy and so they are examining everything that they carry. In the process they seem to have decided that they may be able to make money off of comic books after all and that they don't like the publishers going around them. Besides, it sets a bad example for other publishers. And so they are having their special meeting to decide the fate of four color funnies in their marketplace. What will the result be? No one yet knows, but we'll keep you posted!

NEW SF SERIES FROM MARVEL

STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI

Would you accept the gift of super powers. . . even though you had no idea what those powers would turn out to be?

. . . Even though those powers would kill within a year's time?

Strikeforce: Morituri is a group of people who accepted those risks, however fatal, to give Earth its only chance of surviving invasion by fierce, nomadic aliens called "The Horde." This new monthly series is written by Peter Gillis, pencilled by Brent Anderson and inked by Scott Williams.

Faced with The Horde's impending invasion, Earth must create a defense powerful enough to prevent the raiders from bleeding the planet dry. While the U.S., Russia and Europe can protect their own soil, there is nothing to prevent the aliens from conquering third-world areas and establishing military outposts.

Then Earth's scientists develop the Morituri Process which grants certain volunteers superhuman abilities. Only a small portion of the population has the right physiological makeup for the process to work, and there are two important catches: First—there is no way to tell *what* power will be granted to each volunteer. Second—the process will kill the recipient. Some die almost immediately, most die within a year.

Still, there are enough who dare the risks to form **STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI**. The name of the team is derived from a quote from "The Life of Claudius" by Suetonius, "Ave Caesar morituri te salutamus" or "Hail, emperor! We who are about to die salute you!"

Before the first issue opens, the original team (known as "The Black Watch") has already died, and readers are introduced to the second generation of **Strikeforce: Morituri**, six individuals who received a wide range of abilities in addition to the enhanced strength always granted by the Morituri Process. They are:

VYKING: *The leader of the group, he has a sixth sense that allows him to unerringly locate the other members of the team, and the power to re-route energies within his own body.*

BLACKTHORN: *Her touch breaks down the molecular structure of any object, creating a weak point that allows it to be destroyed.*

MARATHON: *The largest and strongest member, the longer he uses his power, the more it increases.*

RADIAN: *He has the ability to emit a blinding form of radiation.*

ADEPT: *She can analyze and counteract the effects of any substance with which she comes in contact.*

SNAPDRAGON: *She has the ability to hurl plasma bursts.*

Each of the six members became volunteers for different reasons ranging from a desire to protect Earth to a search for glory and recognition. **STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI** will explore the motivations behind each person and ways in which they deal with their impending deaths.

DARK KNIGHT CATAPULTS TO SUCCESS!

The success of **Dark Knight** continues at an astounding pace. As the *Rolling Stone* article on series creator, writer and penciller Frank Miller hit newsstands around the world, re-orders for **Dark Knight** flooded in so quickly that the entire first print run was sold out before the original shipment of books reached the West Coast. Though DC Comics had anticipated the high demand for the story of Batman's last stand and set the print run at 40 percent above orders, there were simply not enough copies. In an unusual move, DC Comics went back to press for a second run—and then a third run!

"We consider **Dark Knight** to be of lasting value," notes Executive Vice-President Paul Levitz. "We hope to keep **Dark Knight** in print either in this format or some other appropriate format."

On the heels of the decison to go baCK TO PRESS, THE Associated Press newswire service ran a story on **Dark Knight** which was picked up immediately by nine major newspapers across the country. Local and National television and radio news reports also picked up the story.

The Associated Press piece describes **Dark Knight** as a graphic novel "produced by one of a new breed of comic artists who take the medium seriously, and use it to tell serious stories."

"We know comics aren't just for kids any more, but it's hard to convince people of that," says Vice-President Executive Editor Dick Giordano. The international media attention focused on **Dark Knight** should help change people's perceptions of American comic books and expand the comic book industry.

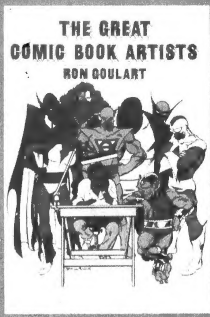
Note: Although originally announced as a monthly, **Dark Knight** three and four are being released as bi-monthlies to increase the book's shelf-life and allow Frank Miller to spend more time on the artwork.

This title will not be a part of the mainstream Marvel Universe, thus allowing Peter and Brent complete freedom to develop the concept.

NEW BOOK BY RON GOULART

Comics historian Ron Goulart has just written a spectacular new guide to comic books and their creators. In 60 lively essays Ron presents the great comic book artists: their lives, their careers, their styles, and the works for which they are known. These essays cover such greats as Will Eisner *(The Spirit)*, Joe Shuster *(Superman)*, the great EC Comics artists of the Fifties such as Harvey Kurtzman and Bernard Krigstein, and the artists of the Marvel Comics renaissance of the Sixties including Steve Ditko *(Spider-Man)* and John Buscema. Plus the superstars of today's comics are profiled including Frank Miller and John Byrne. This is the history of comic books as seen through the lives of their creators.

The Great Comics Book Artists is 144 pages in length, features a new cover by John Byrne and retails for $12.95.



LETTERS

Address Correspondence To:

COMICS FEATURE
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Canoga Park, CA 91304

Dear Hal,

Finally, I would like to inquire about your policy regarding reader contributions. The statement of ownership on the contents page states you aren't responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, but doesn't indicate whether you prefer we did or didn't contribute, aside from your request for letters.

I try not to miss a single issue of CF.

Sincerely yours for a better mag,
Victor H. Meisner
RT 2 Box H-3
Angola, IN 46703

Submissions are always welcome but we insert the cautionary note because we do a lot of magazines here and manuscripts, photos, artwork, etc. are coming in each and every day and it's very easy for something to be missfiled, etc., particularly when it's an unsolicited piece which we have to put aside to deal with after we've handled the pieces we were expecting. But if you have an interesting idea for an article, or you were fortunate in interviewing someone and you think we'd be interested in seeing the interview, by all means, feel free to submit, but please include a self-addressed stamped envelope for our reply. Filling a monthly title with interesting *material isn't easy and we're not too proud to accept help. —Happy Hal.*

Dear Comics Feature,

First off, let me say that I did enjoy your Marvel 25th anniversary issue. I'm actually only half way through it at this writing, so far. . . so very good.

But! The A DIFFERENT BREED: Spider-Man piece really set me off. Just the part calling John Romita a, ". . . slick, competent but unexciting craftsman. . ." who did a ". . .credible job on Spider-Man for a few issues. . ." until the book "started looking rushed and not as carefully thought out." Whoa! Sorry, I really feel this is a cruel and shortsighted opinion and represents poor taste being in an issue celebrating Marvel and her crew.

I dug out my old Romita issues, to see how I could have been so blind as to have truly relished John's work. In a way I feel your article deserves my thanks, for in pulling out these older copies, I was taken back to a greater era in comics. Shame, people. Look at current copies for the description you branded Romita.

Before I close, one more thing 'bout him: years back, when a young artist showed up at the Marvel office on Madison Ave., this gentleman spent time perusing the samples, his advice was encouraging and respected. Should I discover you knocking his work in the future, I'll write you another line.

You owe it to a Marvel great to print this opposing viewpoint. Don't just accept my humble opinion, let me quote that same CF issue, page 47 (Kirby interview). Jack says: *"I have a high regard for Steve Ditko, and for John Romita, who is a fine artist."*

'NUFF!

Sincerely Riffed,
Alan Harvey
60 Cedar, Apt. 2B
Kingston, N.Y. 12401

Everyone who reads comics has their favorite artists. The article you cite was written from the point of view of someone who was buying and reading Spider-Man in 1966 when Ditko left and Romita took over. To many of us, Ditko is the only artist who ever drew Spider-Man well. A line inadvertantly left out of that article mentioned that the sales of **Spider-Man** *actually climbed when Romita took over the book, 20 years ago. —Happy Hal.*

Dear Comics Feature,

I finally bought my first issue of **Comics Feature** (40). I thought it was great. I especially liked the Fun & Profit and Stan Lee Sounds Off columns. I most definitely am going to continue buying your magazine.

I would like to comment on one of the letters in issue 42. The person wrote in and asked if you would have a price guide put in your magazine every 3 months. Well, I for one am all for it. I would love to know how much some of my comics are worth.

Keep up the good work.

John Hutchinson
958 Chesapeake Dr.
Havre de Grace, MD 21078

FILES MAGAZINES

(All files magazines are perfect bound with color covers and at least 50 pages)

Library

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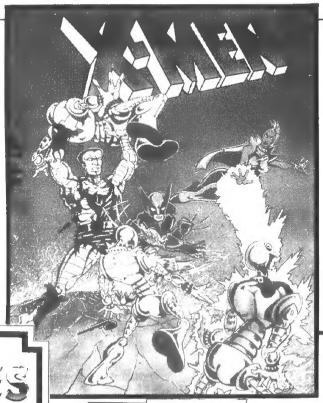
THE COMICS FILES

America's greatest heroes for four decades have sprung forth from the comic book universe whree colorful costumed heroes cavort against evil villains. Sophisticated plotting and serious character development have combined with polished artwork to create new gods and a completely new mythos for modern man! Here in an exclusive combination of profiles, creator interviews and story guides we carefully uncover the creation and development of each hero or team. James Van Hise, a contributing editor to **Comics Feature** and formerly editor of one of the world's first magazines devoted to comic books, the legendary **RBCC**, is one of the few people who could truely do the job justice.

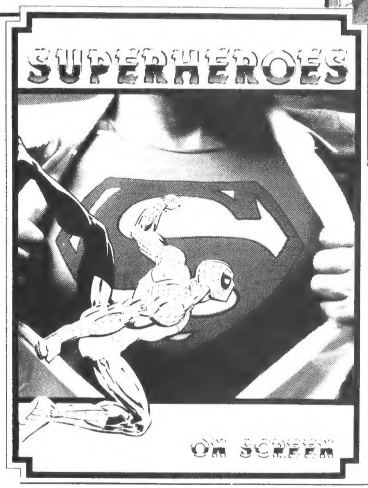
THE COMICS FILES.....THE X-MEN
THE COMICS FILES TWO.....THE FANTASTIC FOUR
THE COMICS FILES THREE.....SUPERMAN

(THE ABOVE VOLUMES ARE $5.95 EACH)



MPS
MOVIES PUBLISHERS SERVICES INC.

THE SUPERHEROES FILES



This incredible series follows the colorful exploits of America's favorite comic book heroes as they leap off of the four-color page and onto the giant screen of the movie theatre and the television set in every home! Capes swirling in the breeze, they face the most wicked of villains to fight the good fight! A combination of episode guides, character profiles, cast biographies and exclusive interviews reveals the whole exciting adventure.

SUPERHEROES ONE...SUPERMAN&SPIDERMAN
SUPERHEROES TWO..SUPERMAN&SPIDERMAN

(THE ABOVE VOLUMES ARE $5.95 EACH(

Comics Consumer Guide

MARVEL

6/3/86 SHIPPING (75 cents unless noted.)

☐**DAKOTA NORTH 3** —
(Thomsea/Salmons) Dakota trails little brother Ricky through Paris.

☐**DAREDEVIL 235** —
(Miller/Simonson) The first of two issues with Walt Simonson as guest artist. Daredevil in Hell's Kitchen, battling a killer of young boys.

☐**G.I. JOE MISSIONS 1** —
(Hama/Trimpe) Featuring Oktober Guard & Cobra.

☐**NEW MUTANTS 44** —
(Claremont/Guice/Baker/with a cover by Windsor-Smith) The return of Legion, Xavier's son.

☐**WEB OF SPIDER-MAN 19** —
(Michelinie/Silvestri/Baker/with a cover by Beachum & Rubenstein) Introducing the Humbug.

☐**WEST COAST AVENGERS 13** —
(Englehart/Milgrom/Sinnott) The villians this issue are Gavilon, Halflife, Zzzax, Quantum.

☐**HULK ANNUAL 15 $1.25** —
(Fingeroth/S. Buscema) The retusrn of the Abomination.

☐**HOWARD THE DUCK 33** —
(Christopher Stager/Mayerik) A one-shot story pencilled by Howard's original artist. Direct sales.

☐**WOLVERINE ORIGIN 1** —
(Wraparound cover by Byrne/Abel) Presenting Wolverine's first appearance from Hulk 180 and 181, by Wein/Trimpe/Abel. Plus a six-page back-up featuring Wolverine and Hercules by Duffy, pencilled by Ken Landgraf and inked by George Perez.

☐**AMAZING HIGH ADVENTURE 3**—

☐**MOONSHADOW 9** —
(DeMatteis/Muth). Direct sales.

☐**HUGGA BUNCH 1** —
(Kay/Kremer/Roettcher)

☐**MISTY 6** —
(Of 6) (Robbins) Misty gets super powers...sort of!

☐**PETER PORKER 11** —
(Mellor/Albelo/Fournier)

☐**THUNDERCATS 5** —
(Michelinie/Mooney/Breeding/Gordon)

6/10/86 SHIPPING

☐**ALPHA FLIGHT 39** —
(Mantlo/Ross/Portacio) Crosses over with AVENGERS 272.

☐**AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 281** —
(DeFalco/Frenz/Breeding) Part two of the Sinister Syndicate: with Rhino, Boomerang, Hydro-Man, Beetle, and Speed Demon.

☐**CAPTAIN AMERICA 322** —
(Gruenwald/Neary/Beatty)

☐**DOCTOR STRANGE 79** —
(Gillis/Warner/Emberlin)

☐**POWER PACK 26** —
(L. Somonson/Bogdanove/Wiacek) Direct sales.

☐**FANTASTIC FOUR INDEX 11** —

☐**IRON MAN ANNUAL 8** —
(Harras/Neary/Williams) Project Pegasus with X-Factor.

☐**X-FACTOR ANNUAL 1** —
(Lyton/Silvestri)

☐**THE OFFICAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE 11** —

☐**SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN 128** —
(Owsley/Docherty/Bator/cover by Beekman)

☐**GROO, THE WANDERER 20** —
(Aragones with Evanler).

☐**HEATHCLIFF 11** —
(Gallagher/Kremer/Roettcher)

6/17/86 SHIPPING

☐**AVENGERS 272** —
(Stern/J. Buscema/Palmer) Crosses over with ALPHA FLIGHT 39

☐**CONAN THE BARBARIAN 187** —
(Owsley/J. Buscema/Chan)

☐**G.I. JOE 52** —
(Hama/Whigham) Cobra finds the location of the Joe's Headquarters.

☐**INCREDIBLE HULK 325** —
(Milgrom) Hulk and Banner are merged.

☐**X-MEN 210** —
(Claremont/Romita, Jr./Green) Introducing The Marauders.

☐**MARVEL SAGA 11** —

☐**AVENGERS ANNUAL 15** —
(Fingeroth/Ditko) Cross over with WEST COAST AVENGERS ANNUAL 1

☐**MARVEL TALES 192** —
(Conway/Kane)

☐**PETER PARKER ANNUAL 6** —
(David/Beachum/Rubinstein)

☐**DREADSTAR 26** —
(Starlin) The Rebel band is scheduled to be terminated by the Holy Church. Last issue. Direct sales.

☐**ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN 1** —
(Of 6) (Miller/Sienkiewicz) The lost years of Elektra's life. Direct sales.

6/24/86 SHIPPING

☐**FANTASTIC FOUR 295** —
(Byrne/Sterne/Ordway/Gordon) The disappearance of Central City.

☐**IRON MAN 211** —
(Mackie/Saviuk)

☐**PETER PARKER 119** —
(David/Buckler/McLeod)

☐**STAR BRAND 1** —
(Shooter/Romita, Jr.) There is a weapon in the universe more powerful than all others. It is called Star Brand. There is no more coveted, loved or hated thing in existence. Now, this dreaded thing has fallen into the hands of Kenneth Connell, an Earthman. Another man might crumble under the burden. The Star Brand brings its bearer pain, worry, suspicion, *fear*—fear that it will be wrestled away into the wrong hands. Worse, fear that it *is* in the wrong hands. Another man might live only to pass the dreaded thing on, to find another bearer. But Kenneth Connell is a man like no other! New Universe title.

☐**SPITFIRE AND THE TROUBLESHOOTERS 1** —
(Elliot Brown & John Morelli writers/Trimpe) She cares about what's *right*, not what the rules say. And she's never been mellow or easygoing. She's Jenny Swenson, a highly respected full Professor of Applied Engineering at M.I.T., though nobody calls her "ma'am," or "Professor" or anything too dignified. Her daddy called her "Spitfire" before he died...or was murdered! Jenny suspects that her father was killed by his employers after he learned how they intended to *use* his revolutionary discoveries in hueristics, and before he could destroy his work. Watch as Spitfire and her computer-hacking comrades, the Troubleshooters, are ready to risk their careers, their freedom and even their lives for justive. New Universe title.

☐**THOR 372** —
(Simonson/S. Buscema)

☐**TRANSFORMERS 21 —**
(Budiansky/Perlin/Akin & Gatvey/cover by Trimpe) Introducing The Aerialbots.

☐**X-FACTOR 9 —**
(L. Simonson/Terry Shoemaker)

☐**CLASSIC X-MEN 2 —**
(Claremont/Cockrum/McLeod)

☐**NEW MUTANTS ANNUAL 2 —**
(Claremont/Alan Davis) Captain Britain and Betsy Braddock, also Mojo & Spiral and The Bratpack!

☐**WEST COAST AVENGERS ANNUAL 1 —**
(Englehart/Bright) Cross over with AVENGERS ANNUAL 15.

☐**ELFQUEST 15 —**
(Wendy & Richard Pini)

☐**ALIEN LEGION 15 —**
(Zelentz/Stroman/Emberlin/Cirocco) Jugger Grimrod is the victim of an intergalactic mob rubout as the lethal legionnaire's past catches up with him. Direct sales.

☐**STEELGRIP STARKEY 2 —**
(Of 6) (Weiss/Sherman) Direct sales.

☐**DROIDS 4 —**
(Manak/Romita & Kremer/Williamson)

☐**MADBALLS 2 —**
(Of 3) (Jacobs/Post/Edleman)

☐**TOP DOG 10 —**
(Caragone/Kremer/Roettcher) Guest-starring Spider-Man!

8/10/86 SHIPPING

☐**ANGEL OF LOVE 3 —**
(Of 8) (Barbara Slate)

☐**FURY OF FIRESTORM 52 —**
(MASK insert) (G. Conway/Brozowski)

☐**HEX 14 —**
(Fleisher/Texeira/Garzon)

☐**JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA 255 —**
(Conway/McDonnell/Wray/Giordano)

☐**ROOTS OF THE SWAMP THING 4 —**
(Of 5) (Wein/reprinted P-I by Wrightson with a new cover by Wrightson as well) Reprints from Swamp Thing 7 & 8. Plus, *He Who Laughs Last* from HOM 221!

☐**SON OF AMBUSH BUG 4 —**
(Of 6) (Giffen/Fleming/Oskner)

☐**TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS 70 —**
(Wolfman/Garcia-Lopez/Tanghal/Bissette) (Reprint from NTT 11.)

☐**THE OUTSIDERS 12 —**
(Batr/P-I-C by Aparo/Von Eden on BL story) Direct sales.

☐**VIGILANTE 34 $1.50 —**
(Kupperberg/T. Smith'/Magyar)

☐**WATCHMEN 2 $1.50 —**
(Of 12) (Moore/P-I-C by Gibbons) Direct sales.

8/17/86 SHIPPING

☐**AMETHYST SPECIAL 1 —**
(Giffen/Newell/Colon/Kesel)

☐**BATMAN 400 —**
(Moench/Sienkiewicz) A 64-page extravaganza featuring art by Bolland, Adams, Kubert, Perez and many others. Plus pin-ups and a special introduction by Stephen King!

☐**BLUE BEETLE 5 —**
(Wein/Cullins/Patterson) The triumphant return of *The Question*

☐**ELECTRIC WARRIOR 6 —**
(Moench/P-I-C by Baikie) Direct sales.

☐**ELVIRA'S HOUSE OF MYSTERY 8 —**

☐**FIRESTORM ANNUAL 4 —**
(Conway/Cowan/Magyar/P-I by various others) Firestorm must find Venom somewhere in Los Angeles or his stepmother dies.

☐**HISTORY OF DC UNIVERSE 2 —**
(Of 3, with a Gatefold) (Wolfman/Perez/Kesel) Direct sales.

☐**THE MAN OF STEEL 1 —**
(W-P by Byrne/Giordano) The origin of Superman.

☐**LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES 27 —**
(Levitz/Lightle/P-I by various others) Four reveling vignettes in thse very different lives of several Legionaires. Direct sales.

☐**'MAZING MAN 10 —**
(Rozakis/DeStefano/Kesel)

☐**SECRET ORIGINS 7 —**
(Sandman/Green Lantern Corp.) (Englehart/Colon/Farmer/Thomas/Hernandez/Montano)

☐**STAR TREK 31 —**
(Isabella/Wein/Sutton/Villagran/Brozowski/Smith)

☐**NEW TEEN TITANS 25 —**
(Wolfman/Barreto/Tanghal) The Titans against the power of *The Hybrid*. Mento vs. his adopted son, the Changeling. Nightwing and Raven in the clutches of Brother Blood. Direct sales.

☐**WARLORD 110 —**
(Fleisher/Randall/Montano/Grandberg/Marcos)

7/1/86 SHIPPING

☐**WHO'S WHO 20 —**
(Of 26)

☐**ALL-STAR SQUADRON 62 —**
(R. Thomas/Harris/DeZuniga) He awoke from the glories of Camelot into the madness of a world at war.

☐**DC CHALLENGE 12 —**
(Last Issue) (Evanier/Perez/Austin/and various others) A 38-page conclusion where *everything* is solved! Direct sales.

☐**DETECTIVE 567 —**
(Harlan Ellison/Colan/B. Smith/Giordano)

☐**HAWKMAN 3 —**
(Isabella/Howell/Heck/Giordano) Introducing Lois Lane, she's after the story of the century, if she can catch him.

☐**LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES ANNUAL 2 —**
(Levitz/Swan/Giffen/Mahlstedt/Lightle) *Child of Darkness, Child of Light*, Darkseid's curse fulfilled?

☐**LORDS OF THE ULTRA-REALM 5 —**
(Of 6) (Moench/P-I-C by Broderick) The mystery of Michael Savage. Direct sales.

☐**TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES 340 —**
(Levitz/LaRocque/Mahlstedt/Lightle) Dr. Regulus holds the new Legionnaires hostage.

☐**ADVENTURES OF THE OUTSIDERS 38 —**
(Barr/P-I by Von Eeden) Stories include *Showdown with the Marine Marauder* and *Welcome to L.A.*

☐**BLUE DEVIL 29 —**
(Gold/Kupperberg/Collins/Cullins/Martin)

☐**BOOSTER GOLD 9 —**
(W-P by Jurgens/DeCarlo) Booster teams up with Brainiac 5, Ultra Boy, and Chameleon Boy in the conclusion of *Time Bride*.

☐**GREEN LANTERN CORPS. 205 —**
(Englehart/Staton/Farmer/Patterson) Kari Limbo returns.

☐**INFINITY INC. 31 $1.50 —**
(Thomases/McFarlane/DeZuniga) A new I.D. for Star Spangled Kid. Jonni Thunder guest stars. Direct sales.

☐**NEW TEEN TITANS SPOTLIGHT 3 —**
(Wolfman/Andru) The dark secret of Jericho's romance.

☐**SWAMP THING 53 —**
(Double sized issue) (Moore/P-I-C by Totleben) Batman and Gotham City are at war with an enraged Swamp Thing.

continued on page 25

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

BY ROY THOMAS

© 1980 D.C. Comics
WARNING: DON'T READ THIS STORY WITHOUT FIRST SETTING YOUR SHOCK ABSORBERS FOR SOME OF THE HARDEST JOLTS OF SURPRISE YOU'VE EVER RUN ACROSS! FOR SUPERMAN THUS FAR SUCCESSFUL IN EVERY BATTLE, AT LAST IS BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH DEFEAT--AND THERE FINDS THE GREATEST VICTORY OF ALL! A CONTRADICTION? YOU MAY NOT THINK SO WHEN YOU HAVE COME TO THE END OF THIS AMAZING TALE ABOUT--"AMERICA'S SECRET WEAPON!"
1

By now, it's one of the best-known myths of the twentieth century:

On a distant planet on the verge of exploding due to powerful pressures within its core, an infant is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid into a rocket prototype—which escapes that world's gravity just as the planet itself is blasted into oblivion.

The rocket lands on earth, where the man-child within is found and raised in obscurity by a childless couple. Because of earth's lighter gravity and different conditions, the lad is stronger, faster, more nearly invulnerable than any human being.

In time, the boy, grown into a young man, goes out into the world to make his name as—

You guessed it.

Superman!

Whether sketched simply yet wonderfully by Joe Shuster in the 1930s—or done with the crude special effects of the Columbia movie serial makers and early tv crews in the late 1940s and early 1950s—or lavishly produced by Warner Bros in the late 1970s with Marlon Brando making big bucks for a cameo as Superman's father Jor-El ("This is not a fairytale for children!")—the origin of Superman is a tale which has gripped untold millions for nearly half a century.

A few years back, a survey was done to reveal the three best-known fictitious creations in the English language. The winners, not in a any particular order, were Sherlock Holmes, Tarzan...and Superman.

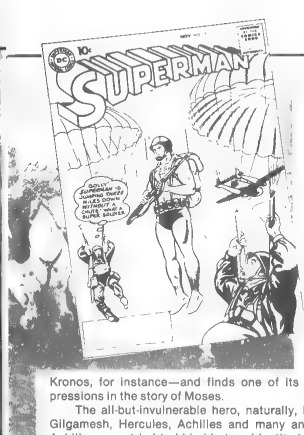
And why not?

After all, writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster, the creators of the Man of Steel, were, doubtless unconsciously, weaving together some of the strongest strands of mythology and science fiction.

THE MYTH

The myth of the child sent away for his own safety and raised by foster parents goes back to the Greek gods, of course—that's how Zeus escaped the wrath of his father

SUPERMAN AT WAR



Kronos, for instance—and finds one of its greatest expressions in the story of Moses.

The all-but-invulnerable hero, naturally, has roots in Gilgamesh, Hercules, Achilles and many another. (Even Achilles once tried to hide his true identity by disguising himself as a woman. But that was because he was a draft-dodger in the early stages of the Trojan War, so maybe it doesn't count.)

The story of a man from a larger planet who goes to a smaller one, where altered conditions give him powers far beyond those of the latter's inhabitants, was well-told a quarter of a century before Superman—by a first-time author named Edgar Rice Burroughs. His hero's name? John Carter, soon to be Warlord of a Mars our Pioneer probes would never recognize.

And only a few years before Siegel and Shuster created their masterpiece, author Philip Wylie had told the story of an Earthman born with fantastic strength, near-invulnerability and the ability to leap hundreds of feet at a time. That hero's name was Hugo Danner, and the book was called *Gladiator*.

Still, all these antecedents take little away from Jerry Siegel's waking dream one night which resulted next morning in his and Shuster's creating one of modern popular literature's most famous figures.

Jerry and Joe did their seminal work in 1934. It then took them four years (and being rejected by virtually every newspaper syndicate in the country) to see their creation finally appear in the legendary first issue of **Action Comics**, setting both comic books and the rest of the world on their collective ear.

1938

'Twould probably be easy to come up with a musical or comedic review about "that wonderful year 1938."

But it really wasn't so wonderful, at all, in most ways. The start of World War Two in Europe was only a year away, as Adolf Hitler's Germany and a militarist/imperialist Japan and a fascist Italy made ready to divide the world between them.

So what effect did Superman have on that greatest, most terrible of wars to date?

That's the weird part.

Almost none.

It was inevitable, one supposes.

After all, Superman was just way too powerful to be unleashed on Nazi or Japanese or Fascist soldiers. In those days before Kryptonite was invented (ironically enough, for radio, not for the comics themselves at first), Superman may not have been the trans-super hero he would become, able to destroy the Earth "just by listening hard," as comics writer Dennis O'Neil once succinctly put it.

Still, in real life, any being so powerful would have been considered a "secret weapon" by the side which was lucky enough to have him—and he'd have been pressed into service against the enemy. What's more, a man as patriotic for his adopted land as Clark Kent would doubtless have *gone*, believing as he did in truth, justice and the American way.

SUPERWARRIOR

World War Two would have been greatly shortened by the addition of Superman (to say nothing of all the American superheroes who came after him)—or at the very least, that war would have been altered most unhistorically. It's almost impossible to conceive of Superman failing, for instance, in an attempt to fly to Berlin and capture (if not throttle) Adolf Hitler. And that would probably have led to an armistice, at least in Europe—nor would it have been much harder for Supes to kidnap Japan's divine emperor.

And of course, that could not be—not unless Siegel, Shuster and DC Comics had taken the route of an "alternate Earth." And that would have confused things even more! This was supposed to be *our* world on which Superman lived, not the parallel Earth of DC's **Watchmen** or Marvel's **Squadron Supreme**.

So, quite simply, something had to be done!

After all, as early as **Action 2**, the Man of Tomorrow (as he was then known) showed his prowess by bringing to a halt a war in San Monte, "a small South American republic."

How?

In Mike Hammer's immortal words, "It was easy."

He leaped from one faction's camp to the other, scooping up each side's army commander—and ordered the two to fight it out between themselves. An old ploy that goes back, perhaps, to the day when such things worked in Homer's *Iliad* if not necessarily in real life—but it worked!

The two commanders discovered they really had nothing against each other, shook hands and the war was ended.

Such a thing might (or more likely, might not) work in El Salvador or Lebanon in 1986. But it worked in 1938, in San Monte, in **Action Comics 2**.

And in that single story, Superman showed a strongly pacifist streak which ran through the strip even during the early days of the Second World War.

**SUPERMAN—
THE MIGHTIEST FORCE ON EARTH?**

BACK HOME

For, in the days to come, Superman's "wars" were less military foes. First came the Ultra-Humanite, earliest of his regular foes—soon superceded by the original red-headed Luthor (no "Lex" yet, for some years).

He repaired bursting dams and fought for prison reform and even launched a "one-man war" against reckless drivers.

He visited Kidtown and launched a personal crusade against illegal gambling in his new hometown of Metropolis and still found time to visit the 1939 New York World's Fair.

And then:

"The armed batallions of *Toran* unexpectedly swoop down upon a lesser nation, *Galonia*."

So began the adventure in **Action 22** (published in late 1939 with a March 1940 cover date), in which Clark Kent and Lois Lane were sent to Europe as correspondents, to cover the hostilities.

Of course, by this time, England and France were already officially at war with Nazi Germany. But it was still what the press called a "phony war," a "sitzkrieg," in which neither side really fought the other following the swift collapse of Poland a few months earlier. So "Toran" and "Galonia" were created to make up the difference.

Interestingly, Clark/Superman spent the whole time battling the machinations of a "foreign movie actress" named Lita Laverne, who turned out to be a Toranian spy. And in the story's climax, after single-handedly wrestling and destroying a Toranian bomber, Superman turned a torpedo back against the Toranian sub which had launched it against a ship of a neutral nation.

When the Man of Tomorrow then burst into a Toranian war council, he forced Toran's head general to admit he had planned this heinous action against a neutral vessel. So disgraced was the general that he was replaced in a "shake-up" of Toran's military, and presumably the war ended.

This, of course, was definitely a fantasy version of the real war which had thus far been felt only by such nations as Poland and China.

The cover of that issue of **Action**, though, showed the mixed minds of the publishers at that time.

Rather than a war scene, related to the story inside, it featured a shot of Superman battling a crook driving a steam shovel.

THE PACIFIST MOVES CLOSER TO WAR

But Superman's pacifist views—undoubtedly like those of his creators and publishers—had begun to change, as America moved closer to war.

And in one pre-Pearl Harbor story (reprinted, like the San Monte story, in Crown Publications' invaluable volume *Superman: From the Thirties to the Eighties*), Nazi Germany was finally identified as an enemy of the United States in all but name.

At a "Dukalia"-American Sports Festival being held in Metropolis, Dukalian consul Karl Wolff held his audience spellbound with the following speech:

"Present here is the flower of Dukalian youth! You have seen them perform physical feats which no other human beings can. Proof, I tell you, that we Dukalians are superior to any other race or nation! Proof that we are entitled to be the masters of America!"

Sound familiar?

All based, of course, on a somewhat naked reading of the statements of the German-American Bund, the homegrown Nazi organization.

This was too much for Clark Kent, as it turned out. Changing to Superman, he threw Karl Wolff for a shot-put and finally left him sitting atop a flagpole, humiliated.

And soon, the Man of Steel had thwarted a Dukalian plan to blow up the Panama Canal—with the obligatory rescue of Lois Lane tossed into the mix, naturally.

SUPERMAN COULD HAVE STOPPED WORLD WAR II ALMOST OVERNIGHT—JUST AS HE DID THIS FICTIONAL WAR BETWEEN THE FORCES IN EL MONTE!

If anybody reading the monthly **Action** and its new quarterly companion-mag **Superman** had any doubt, America was coming down firmly on the side of England, France and the Allies—and against the dictator nations Germany, Italy and Japan.

DEC. 7, 1941

Then came Sunday, December 7, 1941.

The sneak attack on Pearl Harbor plunged America into war with Imperial Japan on Monday, and with Germany and Italy a couple of days later when Hitler and Mussolini obligingly spared President Roosevelt the trouble of trying to get the U.S. Congress to declare war on Japan's Axis allies.

Ironically, the Nov./Dec. 1941 issue of **Superman** (actually on sale a couple of months before Pearl Harbor) had finally showed our hero smashing a gunboat sporting **—at last!**—the German cross, if not the more infamous swastika.

Still, as has been told over and over again, when Superman finally tried to join the army, he flunked the physical!

He went to sign up, of course, as Clark Kent. And the doctors were duly impressed by his pectorals and general physique.

It was his eyesight that got him in trouble.

It was too good!

For, by this time, Clark had developed X-ray vision, a power he hadn't had in the early days of the strip—and when asked to read an eyechart, he accidentally read the one in the next room.

Result: He flunked, and was washed out of the service.

Of course, he could doubtless have tried again and shown that it was all a mistake. But then the problem of how World War Two would have lasted past the first few weeks of 1942 would have reared its ugly head again!

So Siegel, Shuster and DC Comics left well enough alone...and Superman cooled his heels on the Home Front for the duration, fighting spies, saboteurs, criminals and profiteers.

But that's a story for next time—for surely the one and only Superman deserves *two* issues to cover his wartime exploits—and their awesome aftermath! **CF**

NEXT: SUPERMAN FOILS THE BLACK MARKET!

Roy Thomas writes new tales of Golden Age heroes for DC Comics, and formerly did the same thing for Marvel.

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HEROES

BY JAMES VAN HISE

THE MAN WITHO

copyright 1986 Marvel Comics

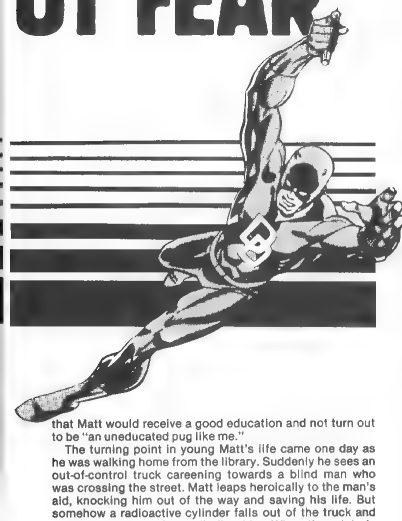
It was in the winter of 1964, January in fact, when Daredevil first appeared on the scene. Without any previous tryouts or even a guest shot in another title where he got into the inevitable battle due to a misunderstanding, **Daredevil** was unleashed. But Marvel was hedging their bets. The cover of the first issue was drawn by Jack Kirby and featured Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four in a sidebar although they don't appear in the story itself.

This was the last new title introduced to the original Marvel lineup of the early Sixties. The next time new superhero titles appeared was a couple years later, and it would only be some of their previously established characters getting their own magazines. New titles starring new superheroes were not as common on the Marvel scene 20 years ago as they are today.

From the beginning, Daredevil, like Iron Man and Giant-Man, was a second string hero. The character just didn't have the power and the fury of the majors such as Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four and Thor. As interesting as his origin was, elements of it were already starting to sound familiar in Marvel's hallowed House of Ideas. Once again (as with The Hulk, Fantastic Four and Spider-Man), Daredevil came to his powers from better living through atomic radiation.

Unlike other characters to whom combat was a skill picked up after they designed their costume, young Matt Murdock was already a self-taught fighter at the time of the accident which changed his life. His father, a boxer known as Battling Jack Murdock, recognized how that career had limited his life and thus forbade his son to follow any sort of path that might lead to the ring. But young Matt Murdock admired his father and so trained in secret. When Matt's mother died when the boy was eight, his father had sworn

UT FEAR



that Matt would receive a good education and not turn out to be "an uneducated pug like me."

The turning point in young Matt's life came one day as he was walking home from the library. Suddenly he sees an out-of-control truck careening towards a blind man who was crossing the street. Matt leaps heroically to the man's aid, knocking him out of the way and saving his life. But somehow a radioactive cylinder falls out of the truck and strikes Matt in the face, blinding him. When the origin is retold in issue 164 some alterations are made, perhaps in an effort to better explain how an atomic cylinder can fall out of a heavily fortified truck.

Although only 15 at the time of the accident, Matt rebounds from this huge setback and continues his studies by using braille. It is about this time that he begins to realize that he can function about as well as before his accident. He learns he has some kind of "radar sense," which enables him to sense objects near him. In issue 177, written by Frank Miller years later, it is revealed that Matt was trained to use this special sense by a man known only as Stick. A Zen master, Stick believes that everyone has a radar sense but that we fail to detect it because of our dependence on our eyes. When sight is gone, we become aware of this ability. Stick tutored Matt in its use and he became so proficient at it that he could function as well as a sighted person. In fact, even better!

Following High School, Matt enrolls in State College (where he meets Foggy Nelson) and then they transfer to Columbia University where both obtain their law degrees. As revealed in issue 168, while at Columbia, Matt met and fell in love with Elektra Natchios. The daughter of the Greek ambassador to the U.S., their affair lasted a year. When her father is killed while being held hostage by terrorists, she is emotionally shattered and leaves America to return to Greece. Matt will be an adult before he meets up with the extraordinary Elektra again.

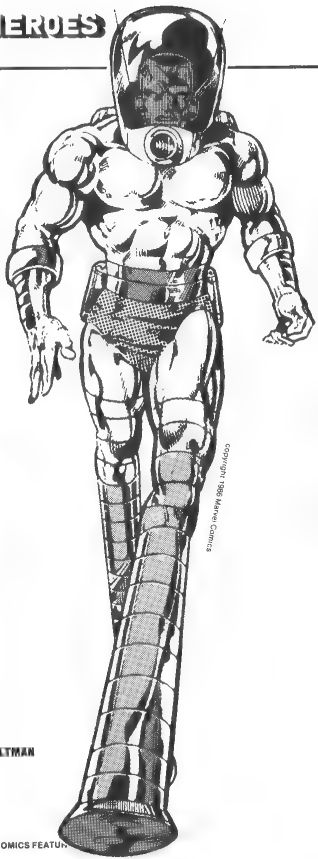
Matt's father, meanwhile, has gone under contract to one Roscoe Sweeny (aka "The Fixer"). Battling Murdock began winning all his fights, unaware that they were fixed. The night of his championship bout, Sweeny orders Matt's father to take a dive. Murdock is shocked. But knowing that his son is in the audience, he refuses to give in and manages to defeat his opponent. Matt is proud of his father's triumph but the celebration is short-lived. Sweeny has one of his thugs gun down and murder Matt's father following the fight.

Matt graduates from law school and sets up a law office with Foggy Nelson. Then he begins planning to bring his father's killers to justice.

A YELLOW MAN WITHOUT FEAR?

In order to bring his father's killers to justice, Matt works outside the law. So as not to imperil his legal career, he creates a costume of black and yellow. Years ago his classmates had taunted Matt with the nickname "daredevil" because of his involvement with books to the exclusion of sports. Now Matt chooses this name to operate under in his costumed identity.

Daredevil interrupts a poker game in a room over the gym which The Fixer operates out of. He tries questioning the men about Sweeny/The Fixer but they respond by attempting to throw him out. Daredevil mops the place up with the hoods. When the Fixer and his thugs show up (including Slade, the trigger man in Battling Murdock's death), Sweeny trips DD up by pulling a rug out from under him. The Fixer and Slade attempt to flee. Daredevil follows the smell of cigar smoke to the subway where he brings Slade down with a billy club. Attempting to escape is too much for The Fixer, who succombs to a heart attack.



THE STILTMAN

copyright 1966 Marvel Comics

When this origin is told in flashback in issue 164, some details are altered. The major change has DD fighting Slade in the gym's boxing ring. There he beats him up.

Initially, Daredevil's costume includes electronics in the headpiece which enhance his senses, but this is soon discarded as being unnecessary. The billy club contains various devices to aid him, including a line he can use to swing from buildings ala Spider-Man.

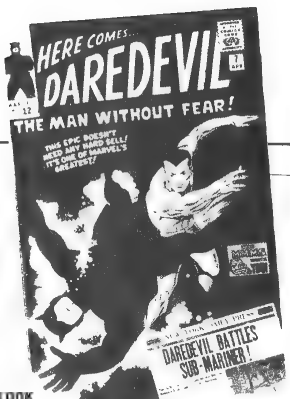
While Daredevil's heightened senses enable him to *see* in the dark, detect when someone is behind him and tell what an opponent is going to do by the sound of their heartbeat, this is the extent of his powers. Matt Murdock's reflexes were already well trained at the time of the accident. He had been doing weight training (which today would be referred to as being a strength athlete). Unlike Spider-Man and others, DD did not gain any superstrength from his accident.

Daredevil's black and yellow costume lasts only six issues. During that time he battles some new villains created just for him—The Owl, The Purple Man, The Matador and The Fellowship of Fear. DD encounters two of Spider-Man's foes fairly early. The Ox appears in issue 6 and Electro (who first appeared in **Spider-Man** 9) is the first super-villain that DD ever faces, in **Daredevil** 2.

Artists changed quickly on the early issues of **DD** as Bill Everett drew issue one (except for the cover and splash page which are by Jack Kirby), Joe Orlando and Vince Colletta crafted issues 2-4 and then, with issue five, Wally Wood took over. Wood was a major artistic force in comics in the Fifties and Sixties. In the Fifties he specialized in sci fi and horror comics, especially those of EC, but he also did occasional work for Atlas. In the Sixties he created the Thunder Agents for Tower, short stories for **Creepy** and **Eerie** and other publishers and landed back at Marvel for a short time. His art has influenced many modern comics talents and he's the all-time favorite comic book artist of a lot of fans. He almost always inked his own work. When he inked the pencils of other artists, the work was transformed so that it looked like his own.

What Wally Wood brought to his brief stint on **Daredevil** (issues 5-11) was a committment to excellence. The changes began in issue 5 when he began redesigning DD's costume. The single "D" chest emblem was replaced with two overlapping Ds—but that still didn't make the costume very exciting. More changes would follow.

Before they did, Daredevil met Spider-Man for the first time (in the pages of **Spider-Man** 16). Still in his old costume, Daredevil had to battle a Spidey hypnotized by The Ringmaster (you'd think they would have taken away his hat after **Incredible Hulk** 3). Because DD is blind, he's unaffected by the Ringmaster's talent. He finally frees Spider-Man from the spell and together they take on the Circus of Crime.


HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!
THIS EPIC DOESN'T NEED ANY HARD SELL! IT'S ONE OF MARVEL'S GREATEST!
DAREDEVIL BATTLES SUB-MARINER!

A NEW LOOK

In issue 7 (April 1965), Daredevil was given his new costume, one designed by Wood. That costume exists unchanged to this day over twenty years later, something that can't be said about a lot of characters! It stands as a lasting tribute to Wally Wood, who died in 1982.

The only thing that changes on Daredevil's costume, depending upon who's drawing it, is the color scheme. It is supposed to be all red, but beginning with Wood himself, it was drawn with so many shadows that it seemed to be red and black. Some have interpreted in this way. The chest area has often been drawn as black except for the DD which shows up as red against black. But the costume is actually all red.

To introduce the new costume and get things off with a bang, DD battles the Sub-Mariner in issue 7. Since Namor has superstrength and DD doesn't, Daredevil didn't exactly beat Subby up. Rather it was DD's valor in battle against impossible odds that impressed Namor.

Then Daredevil underwent one of his best adventures, but not in his own title. In **Fantastic Four** 39 ("And A Blind Man Shall Lead Them"), The FF have lost their powers. Upon returning to New York, they find that Doctor Doom has taken over the Baxter Building and all of its defenses. While trying to penetrate their headquarters, they encounter Daredevil. This teamup continues into issue 40 and remains one of the best stories in the history of the FF. This marks the first time the FF loses their powers, heightening its impact. As a side note, in FF 39 the figures of Matt Murdock and Daredevil were inked by Wally Wood over Jack Kirby's pencils, but in FF 40 this was not repeated.

Issue 8 introduces Stilt-Man and repeats the same cover motif as issue 7 featuring a newspaper headline in one corner telling who DD was battling.

Issue 9 features a story in which we're led to believe that Matt might be able to get his sight back—but it is all for naught.

TWO EARLY VERSIONS OF DD'S COSTUME.
THOSE OF YOU WHO FELT WE COULD NEVER TOP OUR LAST ISH WILL YOU FEAST YOUR EYES ON THIS ONE!!
copyright 1980 Marvel Comics

These early issues of **Daredevil** feature Matt's secretary, Karen Page. They secretly love each other, but neither will admit it. They finally do break the ice and have a relationship which breaks up when she leaves in issue 86, taking with her the knowledge that Matt is Daredevil. Karen would not re-enter his life until issue 226 when writer Frank Miller reveals that her movie career has been less than savory.

Issue 12 of **Daredevil** features the return of Ka-Zar, his next appearance after his premiere in **X-Men** 10. This story runs through issue 14. A new artist, John Romita, took over the book. Jack Kirby contributed to issues 12 & 13. The cover of 13 is a classic Kirby rendering of Daredevil against a John Romita background which ties it into the story in that issue.

Spider-Man and Daredevil have a return engagement in issues 16 & 17. Spidey thinks that DD has gone bad because thugs have been impersonating the Man Without Fear (Doesn't Spidey remember when Mysterio pulled the same thing on him back in issue 13?). This marks John Romita's first work on Spider-Man appearing prior to his taking over that title with issue 39.

VILLAINS GALORE

Issue 18 introduces The Gladiator, a strong, well-armored villain who wears razor sharp spinning metal discs on his wrists. The Gladiator was a vicious adversary who kept cropping up to confront DD (such as in issue 23 and in **Daredevil Annual** 1). Interestingly, this turned out to be one of those rare villains who reform despite a long career tackling superheroes, including Iron Man. Gladiator also appears in issue 166, but reforms after that. He is later victimized by Bullseye.

Since every hero seems to lose his powers sooner or later over at Marvel, Daredevil loses his radar sense in issue 30. DD is up against the Cobra and Mr. Hyde (two of

Thor's most interesting villains from the early days of his title) but is unable to fully deal with them until he regains his powers in issue 32.

The worst comes when DD once again meets with Doctor Doom, in issues 36-38. That arrogant armored adversary isn't happy with DD for having sided with the FF against him earlier. Doctor Doom is the type that bears a grudge. In DD 37 he repays our hero by exchanging bodies with him (just as Doom did with Mr. Fantastic way back in FF 10). Doom finds Daredevil's body with its enhanced vision (Doom doesn't perceive it as blindness) much to his liking, but the exchange is reversed in 38.

Another new artist had taken over **Daredevil** with issue 20, Gene Colan. Colan came to be the one artist most identified with **Daredevil** over the years. That is, until Frank Miller made the title his own years later.

When the series reached 50, Marvel didn't note the achievement in any special way. There is nothing particularly noteworthy about the issue, although in retrospect we mark it as one of the earliest appearances of fan-favorite comic artist Barry Windsor Smith. He drew issues 50-52.

Issue 57, written by Roy Thomas and drawn by Gene Colan and Syd Shores, features the story in which Matt Murdock reveals his Daredevil identity to Karen Page. He will pay dearly for this mistake years later when the Kingpin purchases that information from a man representing a down-and-out, drug-addicted Karen Page.

The title entered a slack period for a time around 1970, its stories only picking up when he becomes involved with The Black Widow. She proves so popular that the title changes to **Daredevil and the Black Widow** for issues 92-107. With issue 108 she leaves the series as co-star, remaining in San Francisco while Matt Murdock returns to his old stamping grounds of New York City.

Issue 100 marked Gene Colan's last but is at least a special anniversary noted on the cover. It features DD and a rogues gallery of his most menacing foes.

The book slid into second string status. With the exception of 116 by Gene Colan, Bob Brown became the regular penciller.

John Buscema drew issues 136 & 137 while John Byrne & Jim Mooney were the artists on 138. A variety of talents began drawing the title. No one remained with it long enough to be termed a regular penciller. These artists include Sal Buscema, Gil Kane, Bob Brown, Lee Elias, George Tuska, Carmine Infantino, Frank Robbins and Gene Colan.

The stories got much better during this period under scripter Roger McKenzie when a new artist took over the title. This artist's stint would be longer than any other penciller's had been for awhile. He began collaborating with McKenzie on the scripts and finally became the writer as well as the penciller.

MILLER TIME

On the splash page of issue 158, Marvel made a prophetic statement: "From time to time a truly great new artist will explode upon the Marvel scene like a bombshell!

FOR A TIME THE BOOK WAS CALLED DAREDEVIL AND THE BLACK WIDOW BUT THAT DIDN'T LAST LONG!

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LOCATE HUNK, WESLEY
NUKE...BOSS, YOU ARE NOT SERIOUS. PLEASE TO TELL ME YOU ARE NOT SERIOUS.
NOBODY'S EVER USED HUM ON A DOMESTIC JOB. HE'S.
THE KINGPIN!
©copyright 1986 Marvel Comics

Newcomer lanky Frank Miller is just such an artist. In the might Marvel age of hyperbole, this time they were right. In fact, no other recent artist has made such an impact on comics.

Several issues later the fever gripped fandom. In the meantime, a fill-in appeared, issue 162, written by Michael Fleisher and drawn by Steve Ditko. Although good, it was flawed as it featured an amnesiac Matt Murdock who becomes a prize fighter—and during the entire time no one asks his name or realizes there's anything wrong with him.

In issue 163, the plot thread involving reporter Ben Urich piecing together the fact that Matt is Daredevil strengthens. The story has DD tangle with the Hulk. But since DD is by no means in the Hulk's class, he just tries to keep from being killed while reasoning with the manbeast. He succeeds but is hospitalized. This is where the next issue picks up.

"Expose" opens with Matt's returned lover, the Black Widow comforting him in the hospital. Ben Urich bursts in and confronts him with his evidence. Matt doesn't deny it. There is a slightly revised recap of DD's origin. The conclusion has Urich deciding not to do the story, and thus cementing an important link to Matt Murdock. This continues into the current Miller-scripted adventure.

With issue 165, Miller became the acknowledged co-plotter on the book. When he became the sole scripter with issue 168, things began to happen fast. Elektra is introduced and a hitherto unknown page in Matt's past is writ for the first time. In 170 Miller brings The Kingpin into the saga. Daredevil's life has never been the same since. In issue 181 Elektra dies. In 190 she is resurrected, unknown to Matt. He won't learn of her return from the grave until the Elektra graphic novel later in 1986.

Issue 191 was Miller's last and a powerful exit.

The writers attempted to follow in Miller's dark, earthy approach but they lacked the committment. The book quickly became run-of-the-mill.

Miller returned briefly on issue 219 as cover artist and writer. Although he didn't do the interior art he did show he could write a strange, offbeat tale. Matt Murdock is the protagonist without once emerging into his Daredevil duds.

David Mazzacchelli joined the book as artist after that. His presence helped to convince Miller to return as writer with issue 227 where he remained until 235. When Mazzucchelli left the book as artist after 233, Miller decided that without his talented collaborator he didn't wish to remain.

During his first stint on **Daredevil**, Miller was considered *the* artist for that character He even drew DD's appearances in alternate universe stories in **What If?** issues 28 and 35.

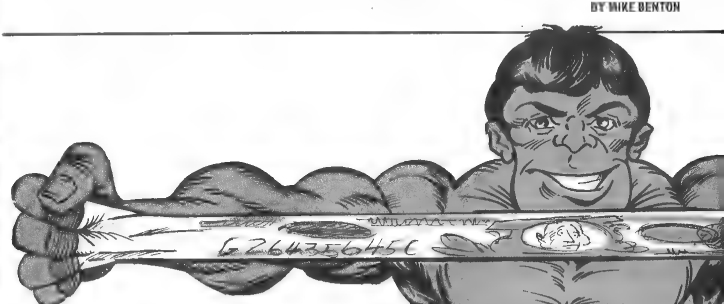
Miller's return to **Daredevil** on issues 227—335 features some of the finest writing to ever grace a comic book. Clearly inspired by film noir, hardboiled detective fiction and sheer committment to portraying genuine human conflict, Miller's writing is so unique in comic books that, once again, it is almost impossible for anyone to follow. That writer will have to have a unique vision of his own. Unfortunately effective visions are rare. The chance that the powerful undercurrents in the series will remain after Miller's departure is dim. As his previous stint on the book demonstrated, Daredevil is only as good as the talent that manipulates him.

CF

James Van Hise is the former editor of one of comic fandom's oldest magazines, author of The Art of Al Williamson and editor of The Comic Files.

FUN & PROFIT

BY MIKE BENTON



There's a lot of talk about making money on new comic book issues. You hear all the time about how some collector bought 100 issues of **X-Men** 110 when it first came out, and then sold the comics and took a trip to Europe.

Like most good stories, there is often more talk than substance. What I want is *proof* that new comic books can be a good investment. I want hard facts that show me exactly how much cash I would make if I invested in new comic issues each month.

For instance, how much money would I make if I bought the top ten comic books each month and held onto them for a year or two?

We can't predict the future, but we can learn from the past. This column is an experiment. We are going to take a "What If?" journey through the jungles of comic book speculation. We are going to go back to the past — back to almost two years ago. We're going to see how much money we could have made today if we bought the right comics for investment in December 1984.

In December of 1984, the comic books with an April 1985 cover date started appearing in your local comic book shop and newsstand. **X-Men** was at issue 184, the **Defenders** were still being published, and the first issue of **Aztec Ace** from Eclipse Comics came out.

To give you an idea of the state of comics back in December 1984, look at the chart of the Top 100 Comic Books for that month. These were the 100 bestselling comics for that month, based upon surveys with the major comic book distributors and retailers. (Author's Note: Please see next page for table/sidebar insert.....)

X-Men was still the bestselling title for that month. The rest of the top ten comics were **Alpha Flight, Thor, Fantastic Four, Phoenix, New Mutants, X-Men & Micronauts, Tales of the Teen Titans, Avengers** and **Hercules.**

If you bought all ten of those comics in December 1984, you would have paid $7.55. About 18 months later, the price guide value for these comics is approximately $12.70.

That doesn't look too bad — $5 profit on a $7 investment.

However, I also checked the prices of several major national back issue comic book dealers. You could buy those same 10 comic books today for (are you ready?) — $6.45!

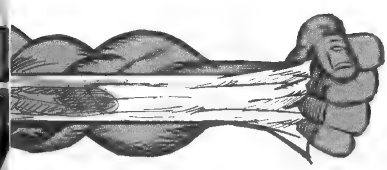
In other words if you waited 18 months, you could have saved a buck. This should tell you something. First, if dealers are selling the books for *less* than you originally paid for them new off the racks, then how in the heck could you expect to make any money on the books, much less $5?

But wait — there's more. If you actually took these same ten comics to a dealer, 18 months after you bought them, you would be offered about $2 for them. So much for the $12.70 price guide value.

Before you become discouraged about investing in new comics, there's still a lot more to this story.

Let's look at a comic near the bottom of the top 100: **Swamp Thing 23** (82 in popularity and sales for that month). Do I need to tell you that this early Alan Moore issue is fetching about $6, and dealers are actively paying $3 a copy for as many copies as they can get?

If you took the $7.55 you paid for the top ten comics and spent all the money for ten issues of **Swamp Thing** 23 instead, you would make between $25 and $50 profit. That's a return rate of around 500 percent on your money. I don't think any stock, bond, commodity, real estate or precious metal jumped 500 percent during that period of time — but **Swamp Thing** 23 did!



Let's look at this in another way. If you bought all the top 100 comics for that month, you would have spent a little over $150. Based on the *buying* prices by dealers today, you could probably sell these comics for around $35, if you were lucky.

If you took that same $150 and bought 200 issues of **Swamp Thing** instead that month, you could now sell those books for $500 to $700.

In case you think that the **Swamp Thing** issue is an exception, you could have done the same thing, but with less success, with **G.I. Joe 22** (33 in popularity that month). Dealers are currently paying $2 a copy for that book. If you spent that $150 on this book, the 250 copies you got at 60 cents each would now fetch you a total of $500.

And it gets better. If you had bought either the **G.I. Joe** or the **Swamp Thing** at *wholesale* prices from a distributor and then sold the books at full retail to a collector, you could have made between $1,000 and $2,500 on a $150 investment!

Now that's quite a difference. Depending upon how you spent that $150 back in December 1984, you could lose $120 or make $2,500.

Now anybody can pick a winner 18 months after the fact. What we want to do is to study this list and see how we can make the right decision next month.

Okay, first notice during that month there were eight first issues—**Phoenix, Batman Special, A Distant Soil, Generic Comic, Aztec Ace, Normalman, Mage** and **Evangeline.** With only one or two exceptions, these have proven to be poor investment items.

Out of the top ten most popular titles, the only one that is selling for above cover price is **Alpha Flight 9.** The other nine can still be had for less than their original retail price, if you check around.

TOP 100

COMIC BOOKS (DECEMBER 1984)

1. X-Men 180
2. Alpha Flight 9
3. Thor 342
4. Fantastic Four 242
5. Phoenix 1
6. New Mutants 14
7. X-Men/Micronauts 4
8. Tales of Teen Titans 4
9. Avengers 242
10. Hercules 2
11. Thing 10
12. Spiderman 251
13. Jack of Hearts 4
14. Daredevil 205
15. Iron Man 181
16. Peter Parker 89
17. Vigilante 5
18. Marvel Team-Up 140
19. Infinity 2
20. Legion Super Heroes 310
21. Batman Special 1
22. Defenders 130
23. Omega Men 13
24. Rom 53
25. American Flagg! 8
26. Captain America 292
27. Batman and Outsiders 9
28. A-Team 2
29. What If? 44
30. Star Trek 3
31. Hulk 294
32. Dr. Strange 64
34. Conan 157

continued on page 23

So you know by now, simply being a popular title or a first issue will not make a comic book a good investment.

One test of a good investment item is that dealers will be anxious to buy the comic from you when you want to sell. Out of the 100 comics listed, dealers today are only advertising as wanting to buy three of them: **Swamp Thing** 23, **GI Joe** 22 and **Peter Parker** 89. (The **Peter Parker** is being purchased for 25 to 50 cents, so it's still not a good investment item.)

If you were back at the comic book shop in December 1984, how would you know which issues to buy and which books to pass by?

Look at **Swamp Thing** 23. Alan Moore began writing the book with issue 20. Readers at that time recognized that Alan Moore was doing something a little different with the title. The next issue, 21, featured the new origin of the Swamp Thing. The story and art started to click.

By issue 22, the word was out in the comic shops: **Swamp Thing** had become an interesting title again. When I saw issue 23 (the first issue of the new **Swamp Thing** that I got around to buying), I knew that this was going to be a special book. Other collectors were looking hard for 21, and already the movement was beginning.

If I had been really alert, I would have bought a hundred copies. I was still cautious. After all, who had really heard of Alan Moore? And besides, **Swamp Thing** had been such a losing title for so long that I wasn't certain if this was merely a short experiment or a new direction in comic books.

In retrospect, however, **Swamp Thing** 23 was a classic example of the great investment comic. For one thing, nobody really expected it to be that great. Everybody was busy buying **X-Men**, **New Mutants**, **Alpha Flight** and Marvel special issues such as **Phoenix**.

The tip off that **Swamp Thing** would be a strong book was the early grassroots collector interest and the fact that an obviously recognizable talent (Moore) had taken over the title.

And that's the lesson to learn from all of this. Watch for the next *hot* book to come out of nowhere. It won't be a first issue; it won't be a current bestseller. Instead, the book that will make you money will usually be an established character or title that is suddenly given a new injection of collectability by a new artist/writer team.

It happened with **X-Men**, it happened with **Daredevil** and it's happened a dozen times or more with the comics that are selling well today.

The moral: Don't follow the crowd when you invest in new issues. Know the titles, know the new and upcoming talents, and when you get a good hunch, buy heavily.

Here's hoping we both make money next month!

* * * * * * * * * *

So much for *profit* this issue. Let's look at a *Fun* topic of collecting comics:

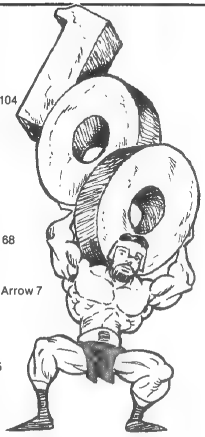
Where Do You Read Your Comic Books?

Stupid question? Nah, it's fascinating!

During my early days of comic book reading (ages 8 to 11), I read comics continually while I ate. Every morning for breakfast, I had oatmeal and Donald Duck. At lunch, it was a sandwich and a Superman.

I no longer ate and read comics after I dropped strawberry jam on a Batman cover, but some of my friends still do. One guy has a stack of coverless comics that he takes to the bathtub with him. Another friend has all of his copies of **Dazzler** on the back of his toilet.

35. Generic Comic 1
36. Star Wars 82
37. Judge Dredd 6
38. Justice League 225
39. Jon Sable 12
40. Firestorm 22
41. Power Man/Iron Fist 104
42. Atari Force 4
43. Coyote 4
44. All Star Squadron 32
45. Amethyst 12
46. Indy Jones 16
47. Warlord 80
48. Nathaniel Dusk 3
49. Batman 370
50. Detective 536
51. A Distant Soil 1
52. DC Comics Presents 68
53. Ka-Zar 31
54. Starslayer 16
55. Action 554
56 Green Lantern/Green Arrow 7
57. Superman 394
58. Kull 4
59. Whisper 2
60. Green Lantern 175
61. Nexus 6
62. Micronauts Special 5
63. Flash 332
64. Worlds Finest 302
65. Arak 32
66. Savage Sword 98
67. Aztec Ace 1



68. Wonder Woman 314
69. Thriller 6
70. Arion 18
71. New Talent 4
72. Marvel Tales 162
73. DNAgents 9
74. Supergirl 18
75. Warp 13
76. Superboy 52
77. Mars 5
78. Eclipse Monthly 5
79. Cerebus 58
80. E-Man 14
81. U.S. 9
82. Swamp Thing 23
83. Beowulf Graphic Novel
84. Sabre 8
85. Mighty Crusaders 6
86. Steel Sterling 5
87. Blue Ribbon 6
88. Blackhawk 269
89. Normalman 1
90. Jonah Hex 83
91. Sgt. Rock 387
92. Warrior 16
93. Mage 1
94. Neil The Horse 6
95. GI Combat 264
96. Best of DC 47
97. Evangeline 1
98. Primer 6
99. Pep 393
100. Archie 328

One collector I know buys gobs and gobs of cheap **Walt Disney Comics and Stories** to read while he brushes his teeth. He tells me that the 10-page Barks reprint stories last just long enough to get through a good brushing and flossing.

Probably one of the fondest memories collectors have of reading comics is when they took them on a trip as a child. "I remember **Batman Annual** 3," a friend told me. "It came out in the summer of 1962, and I was on a bus to my grandmother's in Louisiana. I read it on the whole trip, and those 80 pages lasted forever."

For awhile I was dismayed that comics were no longer available at bus stations and airports, although I recently noticed that they're making a re-appearance. The last time I flew, I noticed a seven year old in front of me reading a comic on the plane.

I looked over his shoulder. He took the book out of a plastic bag that was stamped with a San Francisco comic shop name. He had paid $3 for it. A far cry from the days of a 25 cent Batman annual and a cross-country bus trip!

If you're like most collectors, you probably read a lot of comics lying in bed before you go to sleep. I did this until I woke up one morning with a copy of the Avengers stuck to my sweaty chest.

Of course the number one place to read comics is in class at school behind a textbook. A survey in an educational journal revealed that 40 percent of the teachers who confiscate comic books from their students end up reading the books themselves. So if you want to do your part in educating our nation's teachers, take a comic to class!

Where are other places that people read comics? "At my comic book shop, unfortunately," complains one dealer. Yep, there are still you guys out there who are looking for a free read.

And I do think that it is pretty serious when I see some collectors who absolutely cannot wait to read their comics. I have seen many collectors sit in their cars and read the comic they just bought before they go home.

Besides where you read comics, it's also interesting to find out the special preparations some collectors make before they read a comic.

"I wait until Sunday morning to read all the comics I bought that week," one collector told me. Another collector had an even more interesting technique: "I hate continued stories in a comic, so I wait until I have four or five month's worth of comics and then I read the stories straight through." (Your editor always waits until he has all the parts of a limited series before reading them — Happy Hal)

A few collectors have insisted to me that the only way to appreciate some of the new comics is in an altered state of consciousness. "I never really enjoyed Archie comics until I smoked some funny cigarettes," one guy confided to me I sympathize with him. There are some comics being published today that I would have to be absolutely stinko drunk to get through.

"WARNING: Reprint Comics May Be Hazardous To Your Bank Account!"

Marvel Comics has recently announced its plans to reprint the new X-Men series, as well as the issue of **Hulk** (181) with Wolverine's origin.

Does this mean that prices for the original back issues are going to fall? Probably.

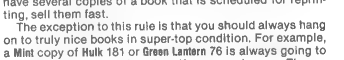
Anytime a comic book is reprinted, the value of the original decreases, with few exceptions. Sometimes a series of reprints may spark new collector interest in other back issues of the same title. Usually, however, the effect of a reprint is to lessen collector demand.

Even as early as the 1960s, reprints of Carl Barks' Duck comics effected the back issue prices of the originals. After DC reprinted the Neal Adams Green Lantern issues, prices for the originals dropped.

Even if prices do not drop after a reprint, the collector demand for the original issues always falls off.

What does this mean to you as an investor? First, it means that you should be cautious about buying heavily of comics which are prime candidates for reprints. If you do have several copies of a book that is scheduled for reprinting, sell them fast.

The exception to this rule is that you should always hang on to truly nice books in super-top condition. For example, a **Mint** copy of **Hulk** 181 or **Green Lantern** 76 is always going to have a solid collector's value. If your copies are Fine or less, however, you'll take a beating on the reprints.



In the back issue market for comics from the late 1950s, to the late 1960s, the up and coming *hot* books are those related to tv shows, such as the Gold Key **Man from UNCLE**, DC's **Jackie Gleason** and any other issues with photo covers of television stars and series.

There are more and more people who are collecting *only* television-related comics, and there's a big crossover market among tv/video fans as well.

Next time you want to watch one of your old favorite tv shows, maybe you should pick up the comic instead.

Stay tuned. **CF**

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Mike Benton is the author of Comic Book Collecting for Fun and Profit (Crown Publishers, $8.95), available at your local bookstore or comic book specialty shop.

THE FOLLOWING ARE DIRECT SALES ONLY

FIRST

5/30/86 SHIPPING

☐**NEXUS 25 —**
Mike Baron, Steve Rude, and John Nyberg.

☐**BADGER 16 —**
Mike Baron, Bill Reinhold, and Rick Bryant.

6/6/86 SHIPPING

☐**GRIMJACK 27 —**
John Ostrander, Tom Sutton and Paul Guinan.

☐**WHISPER 3 —**

6/13/86 SHIPPING

☐**AMERICAN FLAGG 34 —**
Steven Grant, Mark Badger, and Randy Emberlin.

6/20/86 SHIPPING

☐**ELRIC: Weird of the White Wolf 1 —**
(1 of 5) Roy Thomas, Michael Gilbert, George Freeman and P. Craig Russell. Deluxe, bi-monthly series.

☐**SHATTER 5 —**

☐**JON SABLE, FREELANCE 41 —**
Mike Grell.

ECLIPSE

6/17/86 SHIPPING

☐**CHAMPIONS 2 —**
Story by Dennis Mallonee and art by Carol Lay.

☐**WHODUNNIT 1 —**
Story by Evanier, art by Spiegle.

☐**WORLD OF WOOD 4 —**
Reprint.

6/24/86 SHIPPING

☐**ADOLESCENT RADIOACTIVE BLACK BELT HAMSTERS IN 3-D 2 —**

☐**MIRACLEMAN 10 —**
Conclusion to the origin. Alan Moore and Chuck Beckum.

☐**THE NEW WAVE 2 —**

☐**THE NEW ON Agents 10 —**

ECLIPSE

6/3/86 SHIPPING

☐**SCOUT 8 —**
Story and art by Timothy Truman.

☐**ALIEN ENCOUNTERS 7 —**
Bruce Jones and Chuck Beckum. Bruce Jones and Bo Hampton! Plus, Rick Geary's *It Happened This Morning* and *So You Want To Be In Pictures* by Douglas M. Wheeler and Richard Howell.

☐**WORLD OF WOOD 3 —**
Reprint

6/10/86 SHIPPING

☐**THE NEW WAVE 1**
Story by Mindy Newell, art by Lee Weeks and Ty Templeton.

☐**SALOME 1 —**
Adaptation of the opera by Richard Strauss from the play by Oscar Wilde by P. Craig Russell.

☐**CROSSFIRE AND RAINBOW 1 —**
(1 of 4) Mark Evanier, with art by Spiegle.

COMICO

6/6/86 SHIPPING

☐**JUSTICE MACHINE 2 —**
Featuring the ELEMENTALS. Bill Willingham scripts, Mike Gustovich pencils and inks. Co-plotted by Willingham and Gustovich.

☐**ROBOTECH The New Generation 8 —**
Jack Human scripts, Jeff Dee pencils, and Tom Poston inks.

6/20/86 SHIPPING

☐**JONNY QUEST 1 —**
Doug Wildey provides the 12 page lead story and painted wraparound cover. William Messner—loebs scripts the backup with Steve Rude pencilling and Mike Royer inking. Pin-ups by Bill Willingham and Terry Austin.

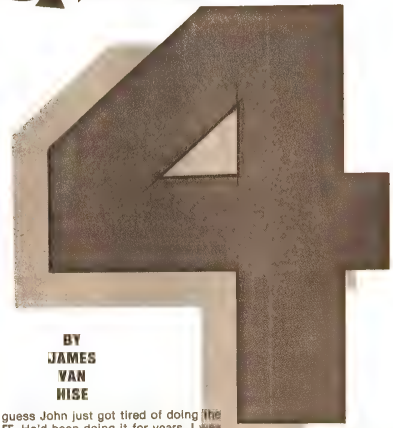
☐**MAGE 13—**
Matt Wagner scripts, pencils and colors, San Kleth inks.

☐**ELEMENTALS 8 —**
Bill Willingham plots and pencils. Jack Herman scripts, and Rich Rankin inks.

☐**ROBOTECH The Macross Saga 12 —**
Jack Herman scripts, Mike Leeke pencils, and Chris Kalnick inks. This issue will also sport a beautiful painted cover by Ken Steacy.

THE Fantastic 4

BEYOND JOHN BYRNE WITH ROGER STERN AND JOHN BUSCEMA



BY JAMES VAN HISE

The 25th anniversary of the flagship title of Marvel Comics is coming up shortly. **The Fantastic Four** were created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in 1961. Through the years, the health and well-being of this title has tended to reflect the state of Marvel Comics itself. When changes were going on within Marvel and their superhero universe, such shifts were immediately noted in **The Fantastic Four**.

When John Byrne was busy becoming Marvel's brightest creative star, he chose the **Fantastic Four** to be his vehicle. But everyone was caught by surprise when three issues before the FF's twenty-fifth anniversary story, Byrne announced that he was leaving. After five very successful years at its helm, it was over.

One of the first people Byrne called after deciding to depart was his hand-picked successor, writer Roger Stern. "It started when I got a phone call from John Byrne one evening," Stern recalls. "He told me that he was going off the FF and that I should write it. That was all very well and good but I needed someone in authority to ask me. The next day I got a call from Mike Carlin saying, 'Write the FF!' And there I was."

Regarding Byrne's sudden departure, FF editor Mike Carlin states, "I guess John just got tired of doing the FF. He'd been doing it for years. I was surprised that he was going to leave right around then, but he seems to be having fun doing his new stuff." (Byrne's "new stuff" includes a revamping of the classic Superman character for DC.)

Stern goes on to explain that Byrne told him he was quitting because, "he was afraid of burning out on it. He'd started the first part of a three part story and was afraid that he wouldn't do his best work. He wanted to get off the hook while he still liked the characters. He didn't want to do wrong by them—and I can understand *that*."

THE SPIRIT OF LEE & KIRBY

Mike Carlin who has been editor of the title for the last couple of years, hopes to make the creative transition as seamless as possible. He doesn't want to see the course that the book has been taking for the past five years misdirected.

"I'm hoping to keep up the excitement that Byrne had for the book," says Carlin self-confidently. "He was very interested in the characters.

"I can't think of anyone who knows Marvel characters better than Stern except for maybe Jim Shooter himself. He really cares about the characters. What I want to get in the book is a sense of the old days, around issues 49—70. Every time you turned around something new was happening. New major characters were being introduced back-to-back—Galactus, the Silver Surfer—and you really didn't get a chance to breathe back then. I want to try to do that. I don't want anyone to have the chance to catch their breath, including Stern. Especially Stern."

Stern's outlook is very close to his editor's. He cites a similar period in the book's growth as the influence on the way he will approach the stories.

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WHO ARE THE FANTASTIC 4 TODAY

BY ROGER STERN
(Excerpted from an interview.)

The Fantastic Four is really an extended family, a small extended family. The family relationships are there. Reed is married to Sue. Johnny is Sue's brother and Ben is like a Dutch uncle. She Hulk has become like a cousin along the way.

MR. FANTASTIC

Reed Richards is interesting because he's never had anything remotely like a normal lifestyle. He was a child prodigy, whizzed through college in his teens, had a couple doctorates when he was in his early twenties. He went from that into being the world's greatest scientist. He went up in the rocket and became Mr. Fantastic and the leader of this super group. He just hasn't had a normal life at all.

He's incredibly brilliant but he's kind of intellectually detached. Some people have said that Reed is the absent-minded professor, but that's too cliche. Too narrow. He's not really absent minded—he just doesn't really relate to people that well. Reed relates to machinery, electronics and serums and such. Put him with a computer and he's in seventh heaven, but with people he really doesn't mesh as well as he could because he hasn't had that much interaction. His growth on the human level has been inhibited by this crazy lifestyle he's had.

THE INVISIBLE WOMAN

Sue, on the other hand, is much warmer and more down to earth. She and Reed really compliment each other very well. Sue knows how to handle people much better than Reed does. I really like what's been done to her character in recent years because she's begun to come into her own as a really tough, capable lady. In the early days, Reed would always tell her what to do. He doesn't have to do that anymore.

Regarding her name change to the Invisible Woman—at first I thought that the name really didn't scan that well, but it's started to grow on me. The Invisible Woman. There's an extra syllable there, but the more I hear it, the better it sounds. As Sue has become a more aggressive personality, or actually a more demonstrative personality, in recent years, the change in name really fits. It was either that or Mrs. Fantastic.

In the early days Reed would always tell her what to do, but he doesn't have to do that as much any more. She's smart and she remembers. She thinks, "Oh, I've been in a situation like this before and I need to make a force shield like this or I need to make this invisible." She went from being this normal, every day person to having this strange power. Reed, being the intellectual, was able to intellectualize and say, "Oh, well, I can do this." Reed gave all the other members instructions in those days even though The Thing didn't like it very much and The Torch ignored it half the time.

Sue is, in many ways, the most powerful member of the team. If she wanted to, she could defeat all the other members. She'd just slap a little force bubble over their head and they'd be breathing their own carbon dioxide and pass out before they realized what was happening.

THE HUMAN TORCH

I always liked the Torch. He's the incurable practical joker of the group. He's young, brash, cocky, and he's got a temper, but he's very slowly starting to grow up. He's entered into his first real relationship with a woman in being with Alicia Masters. Before that he'd dated a lot of girls in high school. Crystal of the Inhumans was his first young love. Everyone has a first young love that they remember fondly, but it really wasn't a mature relationship. It was that late teens—oh wow the sun rises and falls here. But it was more hormonal than anything else.

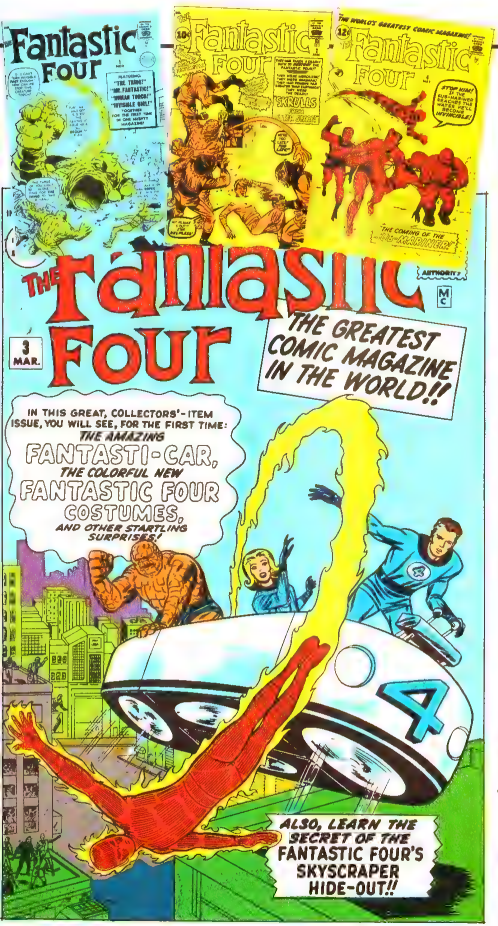
But now the torch is getting in to his mid-twenties and getting some of the rough edges knocked off of him. He's been through a lot of things and he's entering into a relationsihp with a young woman who's probably a lot smarter than he is. Let's face it, when was the last time you saw the Torch reading? His idea of intellectual discussion is asking you what you think of the carburetors on the new Ford Cobra. So he's slowly starting to grow up, and it's about time. It's going to take awhile yet. He's not going to be mister cool, calm and collected over night.

THE THING

The Thing has been through a lot of changes. He left the group for awhile, has been off on a planet and decided that it was time for him and Alicia to go their separate ways. He comes back to discover that Alicia has already gone her separate way and he wasn't really prepared for that. So he's been off on his own, has broken with the group. He feels that Reed has betrayed him because Reed didn't tell him something about why he'd been stuck in the form of the Thing, thinking that it was best that Ben didn't know. It was Reed playing Big Daddy again and Ben's had enough of that and gone off on his own, not quite sure of what to do.

He toyed with the idea of joining the West Coast Avengers for awhile and then things started happening to him. His body has gone through a further metamorphosis and he's uglier than ever. The Thing was no Robert Redford, but now it's real bad. The Thing is getting to be more morose and in slightly darker moods because of this thing that's happening to him. We're not actually going to see much of him as far as seeing what's happening to him. He'll stay bundled up more. He doesn't want people to look at him. When he goes into action with the FF, he'll be wearing a costume which almost covers him totally. Down the line we'll be getting into the details of how this happened to him.

Here's Reed, Ben, Sue and Johnny back together but they've all been going down separate roads. There's a tension now. The Thing is back in the group, but he's not really sure how it's going to work out.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MEMORIES

"Stan and Jack's stuff," agrees Stern enthusiastically. "from issue 5-85. That's a long range, but the book was consistently moving, growing and changing. That's the major influence. That and what John's been doing for the past five years because that was also his influence. I thought that John did a good job of doing the Eighties version of Stan and Jack's stuff. Mine will undoubtedly be different, but I want to get that old Lee and Kirby feel. You picked up the FF then and something was always happening—Galactus, the Inhumans, the Black Panther—they all originated during that period." When asked whether Stern had spoken to Lee or Kirby to get their views on how they had approached the book during those early years, Stern replies, "No, but you know that's not a bad idea!"

"I went into the city (New York) for a couple days and we sat around the office and just jawboned about the FF. I had lunch with Jim Shooter and we went over all this. Mike and Jim have been very supportive. Mike calls up every day or so and goes, "Hey, how about this?" and I go, 'Yeah, how about this?' and it goes back and forth. Every day or so the germ of an idea pops up.

"I was really tense scripting the first issue," Stern continues, "because I was thinking this is the **Fantastic Four**—the World's Greatest Comic Magazine! The book we've been reading for years and years! But writing it felt good. I hope everyone likes it. I had a lot of fun doing it. I hope to have a lot of fun doing it for a long time to come! Every once in awhile I sit back and watch these characters come to life. Then I wonder if I am doing it or they are doing it to themselves!"

WHITHER THE FF

John Byrne's last issue of the **Fantastic Four** is 293. Jerry Ordway temporarily picks up the art chores for issues 295 & 296.

"Issue 294's plot was pretty much completed by John," says Stern who scripted that issue from Byrne's outline. "But issue 295 has a little bit more of me in it. Then 297 is the one where I really take off. That's completely written by me."

But what about 296? That was the anniversary issue. Byrne was to have drawn it prior to his decision to leave the title. With Byrne gone, it looked like the responsibility for the 25th anniver-

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sary story would rest with a writer who had just come on the title and was still exploring the characters.

"It's a big story..." says Stern. "Three issues after I start is the 25th anniversary story—oh my God! I said that I didn't know if I could handle something that big right away and still stay on schedule for the FF and **The Avengers**, which I also write. Someone—I think it was Mike Higgins—suggested to Mike Carlin that they get Stan Lee to script it. I thought it was a great idea!"

In fact, a lot of people are working on issue 296 to try to make it very special since it marks the first Marvel title to reach its silver anniversary.

"Issue 296 is plotted by Jim Shooter, scripted by Stan Lee and is 64 pages, no ads," Carlin informs, "It's being pencilled by Barry Windsor Smith, Kerry Gammill, Ron Frenz, John Buscema, Mark Silvistri and Jerry Ordway. It's being inked by Barry Windsor-Smith, Klaus Janson, Terry Austin, Al Gordon and either Vinnie Colletta or Joe Sinnott for a flashback."

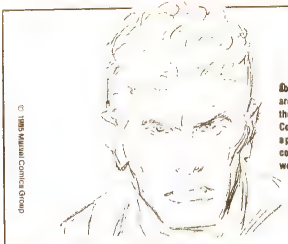
The flashback will be a recap of the origin of the Fantastic Four, pencilled by Kerry Gammill. "I have to wait and see how many pages I have after Barry-Windsor Smith draws his section because mine is going to go with his." Gammill explains. "But my segment will probably be about 5 pages." This origin will follow the content of the original story which appears in the first issue of **The Fantastic Four**, as opposed to longer origin stories which appeared in later years.

Originally, John Byrne had announced a complicated anniversary story involving the FF's return to Monster Island (last seen in FF 1), earthquakes threatening worldwide havoc and the search for The Thing. Some of these ideas will be retained while others are being discarded.

"We are going to Monster Island in search of The Thing," Carlin states. "I don't want to tell too much except to say that we find The Thing and he's back in the FF after that."

"There are a few common points (with Byrne's story) but not many." Stern adds. "The Mole Man is in it. Part of it does take place on Monster Island. The Thing more-or-less returns to the series with that issue. Other than that, it is very different."

The Thing has been absent from the FF since the first **Secret Wars**, but the idea was Byrne's, not **Secret Wars** writer Jim Shooter's.



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John Buscema pencils are kindly provided by the artist and Marvel Comics. We sincerely appreciate their cooperation—beautiful work, isn't it!

JOHN BUSCEMA—ON RETURNING TO THE FANTASTIC FOUR AND HIS DEPARTURE FROM CONAN

BY JAMES VAN HISE

When Jack Kirby, the founding artist of the **Fantastic Four**, left the title, the illustrator who took his place was John Buscema. Now Buscema finds himself in that position again, replacing a popular artist who has been strongly associated with **The Fantastic Four** for years.

In this case, it was more timing than anything else that made Buscema decide to pick up the reins of the FF again years after he left the book. For over a decade he has been most closely associated with the swordswinging barbarian Conan.

"I was called by the editor, Mike Carlin, because he needed a fill-in on the anniversary issue," Buscema relates to describe the circumstances of his reunion with the FF. "While we were discussing it, he happened to mention that John Byrne had left. I was looking for something different because I've been doing **Conan** for the past twelve years. I'd had it with that particular book and so I asked Mike if he'd found a new artist for the FF. He said that he hadn't and I said that I'd like to draw it. I'm not as interested in superheroes as I'd been in Conan, but I've spent 12 or 13 years on that book. I want something different."

Although the current situation in which he is taking over the Fantastic Four is different then when he followed in the footsteps of Jack Kirby over 15 years ago, he still recalls that time. It was then he became the first artist to draw **The Fantastic Four** other than Jack Kirby.

"When you follow Jack Kirby, it's not very easy to work on a book," Buscema recalls. "You're always thinking of him. What would Jack Kirby do in this situation? What would he do in that situation? Jack could be very intimidating. The guy's a genius! I draw 180 degrees different from Kirby. Jack's very stylized. He does things that he can get away with but no one else can. My style is, I think, very realistic. Jack depends more on the tremendous impact of the panel. I try to create personalities. How does a woman stand and how does a man stand? How would a villain sit as opposed to how a superhero would sit. These are the things I'm interested in. I don't think that Kirby's very interested in that. Kirby's more interested in explosive action. He's not concerned with the subtleties which I am. I think that's what it boils down to. I don't think that one is superior to the other—we just have different points of view."

"He started that before I was editor on the book," states Carlin. "It didn't hurt sales at all because She-Hulk was pretty popular. We've planned to bring The Thing back in the anniversary issue for a long time."

Following the anniversary issue, the new regular artist will take over **The Fantastic Four.**

"In 297, the new art team will make their debut. They are John Buscema and John Buscema, pencils and inks," Carlin reveals (see sidebar). "He's going to be drawing issue 300 as well. Joe Sinnott might ink issue 300. He asked if he could and he's not the kind who asks favors. He told me that he inked issues 100 and 200 and so he'd like to be able to ink issue 300 as well.

"We'll be starting off with a bang in issue 297 by introducing a new villain who'll also be in 298. He's going to be pretty tough. His name is Umbra. Issue 299 is probably going to be a She-Hulk and Thing confrontation. It might actually be a drunken brawl!"

THE FANTASTIC FIVE?

The future of the She-Hulk becomes a major plot thread as soon as The Thing returns to the team.

"She's sort of taken The Thing's place and has liked being part of this group," Stern explains. "She enjoys being with The Avengers but she enjoys this, too, in a different way. The Fantastic Four is a closer knit group. A family. The Avengers are an organized team, but the FF is really a family."

"She-Hulk is actually going to be wondering what her place is in the FF for a couple of issues," says Carlin of this character that fans have both embraced and rejected. "She is going to be around for awhile. It is going to be like the Fantastic Five for a few issues. We still haven't decided whether she's staying or whether someone else is going to go, but it won't be the Fantastic Five for long that's for sure."

When John Byrne first brought the She-Hulk to the team (in **Fantastic Four 265**), the initial response was mixed.

"More people love her now than did when she first came to the book," Carlin observes. "Up until then she'd been a character that hadn't really been handled to showcase her major talents. Roger Stern put her in **The Avengers** first and started waking people up to her potential. Byrne took it over and realized it. We got good response to her solo issue. Her graphic novel did pretty well. If Byrne had done the She-Hulk graphic novel two years ago, I don't think it would have been as popular."

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INKING AS WELL

One unusual facet of Buscema's taking on **The Fantastic Four** is that he will be inking his own pencils, something that he has been wanting to do for a long time.

"One reason I want to ink is that by not inking, I feel that I've been losing something in art. I'm really never very happy with what the other people do to my work—they've lost things that I put in. I think that it's about time that I start putting out work that I'm not embarrassed over. No matter who worked on my art, I wouldn't be happy with it. It's not the fault of the inker. I just have certain things that I want done and they either don't see that or else they have a different way of doing it. I feel that a lot of the action is lost in the inking, and a lot of the drawing. I'm very conscious of the way the figure is moving, the way he stands. I really think it's lost when other people ink me.

"Another reason I want to ink my work is that I really don't have an inking style right now. I have a definite pencil style but not a definite inking style. This is what I want to develop. I want someone to pick it up and say, 'Well, this is Buscema's inking,' which I don't have now."

PROBLEMS WITH CONAN

For a few years, Buscema has been slowly working on another project in which he is inking his own pencils—a Conan graphic novel done the way he feels that Conan should have been done all along in the comic.

"Writing, drawing, color—the whole bit. I'd contracted to do it three years ago and I'm not a quarter of the way through it yet. This is something I'll be able to finish faster now that I'm off the regular Conan comic."

Buscema's desire to do his version of the definitive Conan came about from his dissatisfaction with the approach taken in most every issue of the comic. That is why he is writing the graphic novel himself. "I disagree with every one of the writers. I had my own ideas about the way Conan should be done. The writers didn't see it the way I

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PLANNING FOR THE FF

Although not yet into his regular stint on **The Fantastic Four**, Buscema has been working on his contribution to the anniversary issue. "I'm doing ten pages of it. I liked working on the particular section I have more than I would have any of the other sections. It involves an underground meeting with the Mole Man and running through the underground city that he lives in. I'm not inking that. In fact I'm just doing breakdowns."

So far, Buscema hasn't seen the script for his first regular issue, but he's prepared to take up the gauntlet.

"I've been at this so many years that I can catch on to what they're doing. I'm very familiar with this particular book," the artist points out. "It's just a matter of a few words with the editor or the writer, trying to find out what they're looking for and then doing it. It's not something I have to ponder over for hours.

"One thing the editor, Mike Carlin, did describe to me is that the Thing is supposed to be much more grim—not as jolly as Jack Kirby drew him. Also, I'm drawing Mr. Fantastic a bit slimmer than I did before. They prefer not to have him as bulky or rugged looking as Kirby and I did him."

Recently Buscema returned to drawing **The Avengers** after an absence from that title of several years, but surprisingly the artist does not have any particular favorite among the super guys.

"One superhero is almost like another. I have no preference. I'm doing the Avengers and I don't see much difference between doing the Avengers and the Fantastic Four except that they each have a different character. In the Avengers we have Hercules who's a more outgoing type and then there's Reed Richards who's a more introverted guy—laidback. These are things you find out as you're working on the books for awhile and know the characters. But basically what they do is fly around and beat up the bad guy. That's the bottom line. The action. The fighting. And knowing the different powers of the superheroes. There really isn't that much difference from one book to the next, not in my experience anyway. There is more of a difference between the superhero and Conan than there is between the Avengers and the Fantastic Four. There's an entirely different concept in Conan between the way people would react to situations. To me the superheroes are all the same, unless they've come up with some new characters that I'm not familiar with. There are an awful lot of them, but I suspect they're almost the same. There isn't that much of a difference, except in their powers." ●

Stern will continue many of Byrne's plans including those for the future of the She-Hulk.

"John and I always kept in fairly close touch since I was doing **The Avengers** and he was doing the **FF**," says Stern of their working relationship. "The She-Hulk sort of bounces back and forth between the two teams. For a long time after the Baxter Building was destroyed, the Fantastic Four were staying in the Avengers Mansion in their storyline. So he kept me apprised of what he was up to, where he was going with the book. I'll probably still be doing a number of the things he had planned, but in subtly different ways. I write differently than John does. We were still trying to figure out what the She-Hulk's future would be when he decided to give up the book. She is going to stay around in different capacities for quite awhile. It's going to be easier doing crossovers with **The Fantastic Four** and **The Avengers** now without running up my phone bill!"

JOY AND SORROW

There will be no **Fantastic Four Annual** in 1986.

"There will not be one because the anniversary issue is so large," Carlin explains. "At 64 pages the anniversary issue is essentially triple-sized. Issue 300 might be double-sized. With that many high-priced FF products, I don't think that it's fair to expect the fans to buy an annual, too!" Especially since the annual would have appeared about the same time as the anniversary issue.

"There is going to be a wedding in issue 300," Stern reveals. But that's about the only hard information he *will* reveal about that very special story. "We're going to try and make this a wedding unlike any comic book wedding that you've seen before. That won't be easy because they've been done almost any way I can think of. But this one will be done a little differently still, making it more difficult for the next person who has to write a wedding in comics."

All that editor Mike Carlin will admit is that the wedding involves Alicia Masters, the former girlfriend of The Thing. "That's just about the right amount to tell people. They can probably all figure it out—but then again they might not!"

After The Thing returns to the Fantastic Four, the stories (beginning in issues 297) will deal with the alteration in the relationships within the FF, particularly between Ben Grimm and Johnny Storm.

Jerry Ordway pencilled and Al Gordon inked this homage to King Kirby—Marvel and the Fantastic Four's seminal artistic talent!

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"It'll be strained for awhile," Stern admits. "There are very important things happening in the anniversary issue between the Human Torch and the Thing. The Torch and the Thing have always argued, but it's going to be less bantering from now on. Their arguing will take on a more serious tone because of what's happening to the Thing. The fact that the Torch has a romantic relationship with the Thing's old girlfriend is not going to be easy. Even though The Thing returned to Earth having decided that their relationship couldn't go any further and that they should break it off, the fact that it was already done for him doesn't sit well. Memories will always be there. Seeing Johnny with Alicia would have to rankle.

"The Torch feels a little guilty," Stern adds. "He's in love with his best buddy's old girlfriend. Even though the love that Johnny and Alicia share is pretty strong, there's still that underlying guilt."

There is also something else complicating the internal dynamics of the Fantastic Four after Ben's return. He's not the same Thing that he was before. His appearance has changed again, just as it did before. But this time the Thing's appearance has become truly horrible.

"There's a scene coming up in a story I'm writing (in issue 297) where little Franklin sees The Thing for the first time since this change has happened to him," Stern relates. "The boy is frightened and this is a serious emotional blow to The Thing. After all, this is his godson, and the kid's scared of him!" Part of the cause for The Thing's frightening metamorphsis is Ben Grimm's exposure to strange energies on the planet that The Beyonder created in **The Secret Wars**. There are other elements involved as well. These will be revealed in coming issues.

AFTER THE ANNIVERSARY

Although Mike Carlin will continue editing **The Fantastic Four** as before, he doesn't try to pretend that things will be the same as they have been for the past five years.

"Two people can do a story based on the same idea and they would be totally different," Carlin explains. "Stern and Byrne, while equals, are still very different. Stern is a major creative force. Having Buscema both pencil and ink the book we'll get one man's vision there."

With issue 296, the anniversary issue, not due to appear until August, Stern is still working with Jerry Ordway on his two interim issues. He's also planning the events to follow The Thing's return.

"The issue we're working on right now is 295." says Stern. "Jerry Ordway is just finishing it up and I'll have to start scripting it. Jerry's been doing an incredible job on this. I've never really seen his pencils before and they're really beautiful. It's sort of a latter day cross between Wally Wood and Al Williamson. If you can imagine that. There's a lot of Woody in the things he does—architecture and shading. I can see why he wants to do more pencilling I believe that Al Gordon is inking those issues. He's been the semi-regular inker on the book for the past six months."

With Stern at the beginning of his writing stint on **The Fantastic Four**, whole new creative opportunities have opened. He is considering many different story possibilities.

"It's always interesting to see the Inhumans with the FF," Stern says, "but I need to talk to Ann Nocenti because she's writing an Inhumans graphic novel. I don't want to come up with a storyline that would screw up what she's working on."

But there are even more dynamic characters than the Inhumans in the long history of the Fantastic Four.

When you think of the FF you also think of Dr. Doom," Stern continues. "The two are always inseparable.

"On the other hand, because I'm writing the **Avengers** and the FF I thought it might be fun to have them go up against each other's adversaries for awhile just to get the difference in approach. I'd like to see the Avengers take on Dr. Doom or Galactus and have the **FF** go up against Kang the Conqueror or Ultron. And maybe something with the Sub-Mariner. He's been an Avenger but he has a long history with the FF, as both an adversary and an old romantic interest of Sue's as well.

"Until I can think of a very different Galactus story, I don't have any plans for him. The Silver Surfer is a possibility, but he has a limited series coming up and a graphic novel that I believe Stan Lee is writing. I want to see what's happening with those first. The Surfer might show up in a cameo appearance in issue 300. I haven't quite settled on that yet.

"I'm going to keep the same rhythm that John Byrne has had in the book," Stern stresses, "with something always happening!"

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Animated Antics

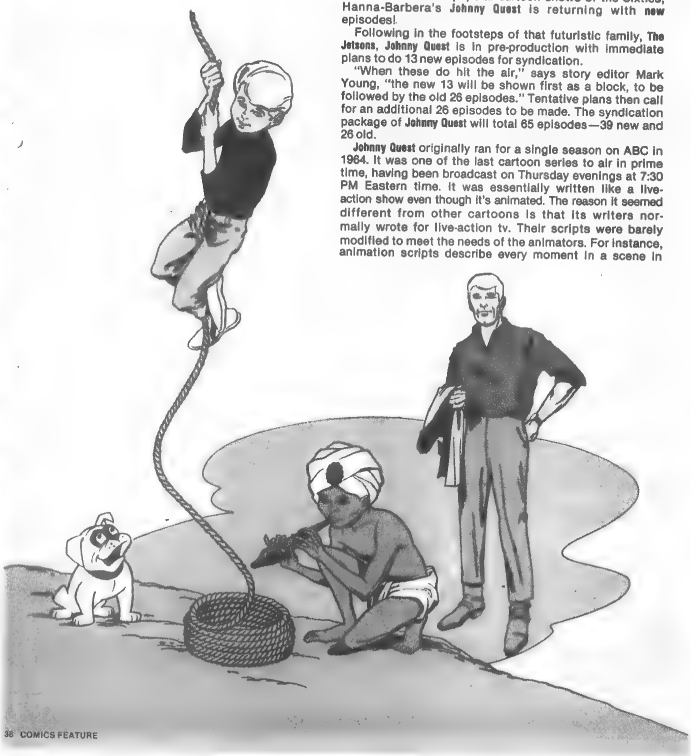
BY JAMES VAN HISE

One of the most popular cartoon shows of the Sixties, Hanna-Barbera's **Johnny Quest** is returning with new episodes!

Following in the footsteps of that futuristic family, **The Jetsons**, **Johnny Quest** is in pre-production with immediate plans to do 13 new episodes for syndication.

"When these do hit the air," says story editor Mark Young, "the new 13 will be shown first as a block, to be followed by the old 26 episodes." Tentative plans then call for an additional 26 episodes to be made. The syndication package of **Johnny Quest** will total 65 episodes—39 new and 26 old.

Johnny Quest originally ran for a single season on ABC in 1964. It was one of the last cartoon series to air in prime time, having been broadcast on Thursday evenings at 7:30 PM Eastern time. It was essentially written like a live-action show even though it's animated. The reason it seemed different from other cartoons is that its writers normally wrote for live-action tv. Their scripts were barely modified to meet the needs of the animators. For instance, animation scripts describe every moment in a scene in



Jonny Quest— Part 1

greater detail than film scripts. They also require more action and less dialogue. The dialogue must be broken up with action because prolonged closeups of animated heads get dull quickly.

As a primetime show, **Jonny Quest**, although featuring a young boy as the main character, went much further in the adventure format than any cartoon had before. Stories often featured gunplay, violent deaths, overt threats against the boy hero and even scary monsters, all anathema to Saturday morning cartoons as they exist today. The show dabbled in horror and could occasionally become nightmarish. A story about an ancient Egyptian mummy come back from the dead featured a scene in which we see a sudden view of the mummy's withered face as glimpsed through a set of open blinds on a window.

The show features a lot of action and certainly would be judged violent by today's standards. When it was shown in reruns over the years by various networks, scenes were often trimmed, particularly in one episode where a man overboard is endangered by a shark.

FANCIFUL THREATENING SITUATIONS

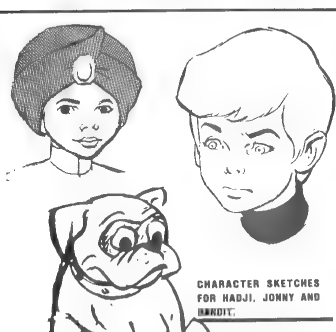
The main characters are Jonny, the twelve year old son of Dr. Benton Quest (a brilliant scientist and also a main character), Race Bannon, an assistant and bodyguard of the Quests, and Hadji, an East Indian Boy. His background is murky but he was apparently adopted by Dr. Quest and is Jonny's constant companion. Oh yes—we musn't forget Bandit. Bandit is a little white dog with black markings. One of those markings forms a mask around the dog's eyes inspiring the name. In the 21 years since **Jonny Quest** originally aired, cute doggy sidekicks have become more common but far less endearing. The slapstick antics of Scooby Doo and other canine capers pale beside the heroics of Bandit. Bandit didn't talk (or even mumble) and more or less acted like a real dog, serving not only as comedy relief but also as an object of jeopardy.

Jeopardy is a touchy area in modern cartoon adventures, but Mark Young insists that the new **Jonny Quest** adventures will be faithful to the old.

"Jeopardy is exactly what we're going to be concentrating on in the new series," Young promises. "More escapes, more threatening situations or fanciful threatening situations, if you will."

What will enable the new shows to stay closer to the style of the old is the fact that it won't be done for a network. That is where strict restrictions come into play.

"Use of handguns, excessive violence and implied death of characters are some of the things which you can't do today," Young states. "The shows which we do for networks are policed more strictly. When you get into the world of syndication, we become our own censors. We really have no one else to answer to then except our own good taste and good judgement, though we are using most of the guidelines which are set up with the networks.



CHARACTER SKETCHES FOR HADJI, JONNY AND BANDIT.

Through the years they have been developed for children's television. We will keep fantasy weapons and not really have characters firing guns at each other." But Young admits that the original series did feature a lot of gunplay. "Because it was in prime-time, they were looking for a portion of the adult audience. We've become more sensitive to how these things influence kids. There will be some knockdown, dragout fights but overt violence will be eliminated. Or else implied in some other way besides graphically. We're going to stay away from things like references to, say, an Arab leader who wants to unite the United Arab Republic, which was used in the "Curse of Anubis" episode. There won't be direct reference to a specific people or country. There won't be any Russians wearing black jackets running around here, though we will want to imply that kind of a bad guy."

Speaking of bad guys, **Jonny Quest** featured a recurring master villain in the Fu Manchu mold named Dr. Syn.

"We're going to keep him in. It's evolving but there is a need to keep some continuity with those shows. The model sheets on new characters are very close to what they were. There's just a little bit of updating on some of them. Race Bannon, I think, we're giving a little longer hair. He's also going to look more muscular, perhaps in reaction to the current He-Man/Rambo atmosphere of heroes out there. Dr. Syn is going to be used as a recurring bad guy here and there, or people are going to be his minions out in the world raising havoc."

THE ESSENCE OF JONNY QUEST

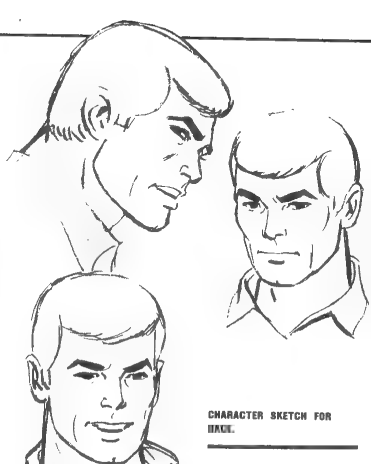
Looking back on the old episodes from a vantage point twenty years later, we can see both how unusual the show was and how it was a product of its times. Certainly story editor Mark Young realizes this.

"It was so weird, having that kind of show on then," Young observes, "It was at the height of the James Bond craze, or at just the beginning of it. I have a lot of fond memories of that. It's kind of funny looking at the old shows now. A lot of stuff still holds up, even today. The haircuts look like something from Melrose Avenue more than anything else, but everything else holds up. It was an interesting mix—science fiction, horror, a little bit of espionage, international intrigue—and we're still holding to that for the new series. We're trying to make a real nice balance.

"Our initial plan is to do 13 shows. Right now there's a syndicated show targeted specifically for Sunday morning, which is a really untapped area for children's programming and for cartoons. The show is called **The Funtastic World of Hanna-Barbera**. It's comprised of three half-hour shows which are totally different from each other. Those three half-hours have been so successful that that's why they came up with the idea of doing a new **Quest** show. **Jonny Quest** will round it out to a full two hours. I believe it'll be in the last half-hour since the **Funtastic World** starts out targeted for a much younger audience, and progresses with each half-hour."

The casting of voices for the new **Jonny Quest** has already begun. Don Messick will return as the voice of Dr. Quest and Mike Rhodes, the voice of Race Bannon, has been auditioned but not yet signed. New actors will do the voices of Jonny and Hadji. Jonny was originally done by a young Tim Matheson, who has since grown into adulthood and been featured in roles in such films as **Animal House** and the recent tv movie **Blind Justice**.

Since the old shows ran about 26 minutes and the new shows are 22, the original episodes will have to be trimmed to fit in the new slot. How well the initial 13 new episodes do teamed with the old 26 will determine whether the final 26 are made next year.



CHARACTER SKETCH FOR HADJI.

THE NEW ADVENTURES

The first new episode of **Jonny Quest** will feature a motif popular in the old series—the mad scientist and his awesome creation.

"The only story which has gone all the way through the writing process and has just finished up is basically: what if an evil-minded scientist did some genetic engineering, took cells from a fossilized dinosaur bone and recreated an entire species of dinosaurs from scratch?" Young reveals. "He's on this mystery island and he doesn't just recreate the old dinosaurs, he creates what we're calling hybrid versions, bits and pieces, like patchwork dinosaurs. A Dr. Moreau-esque approach. He's trying to refine his process down to where he has a dinosaur creature who has enough brains to take command, all the armament and strength of a prehistoric animal and is about eight feet tall so he can get around easier. In fact, he does create this one prototype. He's planning to manufacture scores of these and sell them to the highest bidder to create an army of Reptilians, as he calls them. He has one Reptilian that he sends out as an experiment to see how he'll do under combat conditions. It slithers in, raises havoc and slinks away before anyone really knows what's going on. The Quests are asked to go and investigate because the military can't make heads or tails of this. Dr. Quest goes in and uncovers this bizarre plot. You've got to watch the show to see how it comes out."

While the old shows featured a lot of gadgets and super-scientific devices, the new show will have even more. Replacing the gigantic airplane seen in the opening credits of **Jonny Quest** will be a new craft called the Quest One which

COMICS FEATURE would like to take this opportunity to thank Hanna-Barbera for their generosity in providing the character sketches accompanying this article. They are crafted by an animator who should be familiar to comic book fans: Frank Brunner.

AND ONE FOR THE PROF.

they will use for long distance travelling. It will feature a detachable reconaissance craft called the Quest Two.

The new series will also bring in a new female character. But while she will be recurring, she won't be in each and every new episode.

"She's a young girl who is the same size and age as Jonny," Young explains. "Her name is Jessica Bradshaw, but at this point her last name might change. The back-story on her is that Dr. Quest and Dr. Bradshaw went through undergraduate college together and Dr. Bradshaw is an equally brilliant scientist. He has this little girl named Jessie and she and Jonny would play in each other's laboratories when they were growing up because their fathers were such good friends. Jonny never liked her because he always considered her a kind of silly and whiny brat. They just never got along too well.

"Dr. Bradshaw sends an urgent message to Dr. Quest saying that he has to leave the country and to please take care of Jessie for him. Jonny complains but Dr. Quest goes, 'She's the daughter of one of the most brilliant scientists in the world. Surely, after all this time, some of that has rubbed off on her.' Just then the door opens and there she stands with a zebra striped suitcase and a Cyndi Lauper-esque hairdo. But beneath that she truly is a brilliant young woman and probably has an IQ several points higher than Jonny, but she doesn't show it all the time. As she joins them in their adventures, she'll come out with these bursts of brilliant deductive reasoning. She knows about such things as geothermal dynamics and metal stress experiments that she has soaked up from her father. In fact, she and Dr. Quest might occasionally get into some debate over some esoteric thing and Jonny doesn't even know what's going on. She also happens to be very good at *savate*. If she has to, she can handle herself in a tough situation. As this episode I'm currently working on goes, they start out not liking each other. In the new stories I'd like to see her in at least four of them, maybe even half of them, but not in all of them."

The only female character in the old series, Jade, will also be seen again, but probably no more often than she had been before. The only difference is that she'll be fleshed out a bit more to be less of a cliche.

"Jade was kind of a silly stereotype of a female," states Young. "In one show she was like a vamp wearing banana republic type outfits. She had a long cigarette, was sultry and sounded like Mae West. That's not really a credible facsimile of a female any more. She is going to be a love interest of Race's. The back story which we developed for her was that they were a team once, working for intelligence-1 which is the organization that he works for. They were out there in the field trying to do their spy work but started to develop a romance. Because their jobs were so dangerous they decided it would be better to split up the team and not pursue a relationship. They didn't know how long they'd be around. Jade will pop up here and there because she's still working for Intelligence-1. She might get assigned to the same thing as Race is."

But despite the back-story of Race and Jade, the new **Jonny Quest** episodes will highlight Jonny more than the old shows often did.

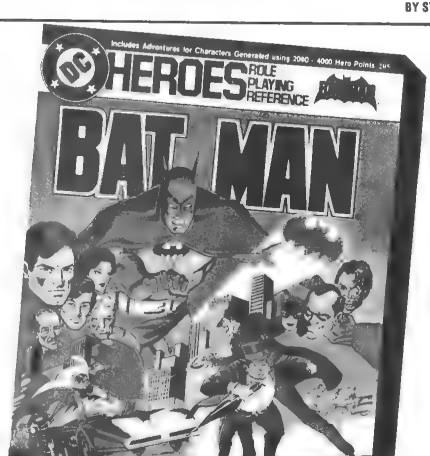
"A lot of those shows seemed to keep focusing on Race," Young observes. "Everything kind of went in his direction. We're going to keep it focused on Jonny and the kids. Hadji will be doing more magic than he did before. We're going to expand his abilities a bit. There's even a story I really want to do which is a back-story on Hadji and the person in India who taught him everything he knows. This guy has extrasensory perception and telekinetic powers and the bad guys are using that against the free world.

"The storylines we're playing with are a mix of science fiction, fantasy, high adventure and high jeopardy."

NEXT: One of the world's greatest animators Joe Barbera, tells more about **Jonny Quest**. **CF**

Games

BY STEVE PERRIN



Very early in my comic reading career I fell in love with the Justice Society of America. It seems like I've always known about the "Bunch of Swell Guys," but in fact it was sometime around 1962 that my side of the love affair blossomed.

The exact date is no longer clear in my mind (so much for a lover's precision of memory). Hard core collectors will be able to tell me in seconds just when the second issue of Hawkman's first tryout in **Brave and the Bold** came out. In that book were the names and full addresses of four fans whose letters (without full addresses) had already appeared in some issues of **Flash**, **Justice League of America** and even **Green Lantern**. One of these fans was a gentleman named Roy Thomas. (Note: This was back before Roy turned pro!)

Roy's letter seemed the most interesting to me, so I took advantage of the full address to write him — one fan to another. I still have the letter he sent back, and all the others of what turned into a long correspondence.

I had first heard of the Justice League of America in the first JLA letter column, where editor Julius Schwartz listed the heroes who had started and finished the organization. But Roy really introduced me in full to the fabled Justice Society of America. He described them and their powers, he gave me a quick rundown on their history, and even went so far as to trust the mails to send me some tattered-but-treasured copies of **All Star Comics** — on loan, of course.

Roy went through fandom and on to become a comics professional. I had my fling with fandom and got married. Many years later, I started writing games and game supplements and gained my own measure of fame (someday I may even find a fortune...). A few years back, Roy started writing **All-Star Squadron** and fulfilled his age-old dream of actually spinning tales about his old favorites. Somewhat more recently, he and I renewed our acquaintance. Now, I think we've come full circle.

Unless there is a drastic change of plan at DC comics

DC, JAPAN AND PSIS

within a week or so of writing this, I will shortly sign a contract with Mayfair Games to do an **All-Star Squadron Sourcebook** for their **DC Heroes Role Playing Game.** My partial collaborator will be Roy Thomas. Look for it; it should be out about the same time as the first issue of the **New All Star Squadron.**

I look forward to this chance to work on the All-Stars, who are one of my favorite hero teams. I also look forward to the chance to work with the man who brought me into comics fandom, collecting and—indirectly—into gaming: Roy Thomas.

Oh yes, we are also thinking of working on an **Infinity Inc.** supplement together. It should feature his villain group, Helix. With luck this supplement and his next series of stories featuring Helix will be out at the same time, with the same basic plot. In effect, you will have the chance to rewrite comic book history and see how the heroes do with you at the helm.

I have to work around both my and Roy's busy schedules with this one (both DC and Mayfair would be *most* upset if working with me upset Roy's comic-writing schedule, and Roy would be upset if it interfered with his movie/tv script-writing projects), so we will see what happens. At this point, we don't even have a proposal, much less a contract. We just have the enthusiasm of Roy, me and the editor at Mayfair. Hopefully, that will be enough.

And that's another glamorous glimpse into the life and times of Steve Perrin — boy freelancer and **COMICS FEATURE** columnist.

BATMAN SOURCEBOOK

Meantime, the gang at Mayfair Games has been busy. Their latest is the **Batman Sourcebook**, written by veteran gamewriter Mike Stackpole and full of everything that makes Batman the Dark Night Detective.

Besides the 80-page book, the buyer gains four 22"x17" maps with the layouts of Wayne Manor, the Wayne Foundation and both Batcaves. These are printed back-to-back on two sheets of paper. One sheet has the manor and the Foundation Penthouse, the other has the two different Batcaves. Naturally, no one is likely to need both residences or both Batcaves at the same time.

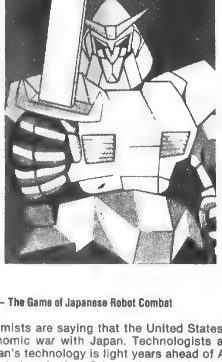
The text provides a history of the Batman and complete game stats of Bats himself, Robin, Nightwing, Batgirl, Catwoman, Talia, Alfred and many other friends, including the original Outsiders. Lamentably, this package was put together before the recent split from the Outsiders and the addition of Looker to the group.

Perhaps more important, almost all of Batman's important enemies have been detailed, including origins, stats and tactical notes. This gives you all the information on the Joker, the Riddler, Clayface and Ra's al Ghul. Stackpole even demonstrates how to create your own Batman villain by providing an example — Shadowmask.

All of Batman's vehicles and gadgets are described in game terms. The book closes with a series of scenarios. One is actually meant for the entire Outsiders, and concerns the new villain, Shadowmask, and his attempts to smuggle cocaine into the country. The other is meant for Batman alone — an ideal opportunity for one-on-one role playing as his old enemy, Ra's Al Ghul, is resurrected for another attempt to destroy his nemesis.

The **Batman Sourcebook** is a good source of information and ideas whether you play the **DC Heroes** game or not. At $10.00 for 96 pages of material (80 pages of text plus 16 "pages" of map), this supplement maintains the excellent tradition of top quality material for very low prices that Mayfair has promoted throughout this line.

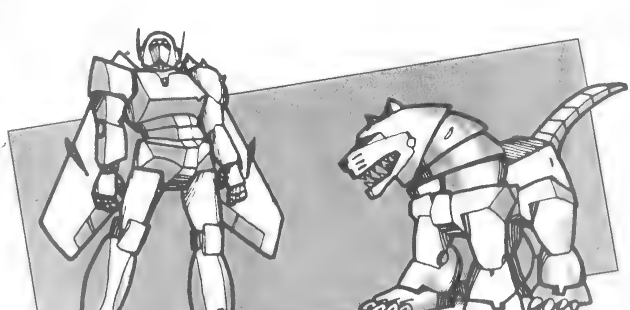
This is arguably the best supplement produced so far. (It should remain such at least until my **All Star Squadron** sourcebook hits the stands....)



MEKTON — The Game of Japanese Robot Combat

Economists are saying that the United States is losing the economic war with Japan. Technologists are saying that Japan's technology is light years ahead of America's, particularly in robotics. Others disagree, but in one field the Japanese *have* managed to attain a position of technical superiority that no one will seriously doubt — animation.

In Japan, animation is considered a serious art form and animated shows are watched by everyone, not just the 2-11 year old children that the American market is geared for. Apparently, many watchers in Japan appreciate well done high-tech science fiction and fantasy. One of the mainstays of Japanese animation for the last twenty years has been the giant robot.



In the last five years, the giant robots have invaded the United States, with a lot more success than the attack on Pearl Harbor. The robots are even moving on from the cartoon shows into the comic books. Licensed **Robotech**, **Voltron** and **Transformers** (although the last is American) comic books are now on the stands. No doubt more are on the way.

This fascination with giant robot defenders has not been lost on the gaming public. Last year, two robot-based games debuted at about the same time: **Battledroids** (renamed **Battletech** after a call from George Lucas) and **Mekton**. They were soon followed by **Warbots**. There are more on the way, including the **Robot Warriors** game I am preparing for Hero Games.

Battletech (from FASA) is effectively a tank boardgame with legs instead of treads. Gamers play groups of humanoid tanks (most of whose appearance is based directly on the Macross valkyrie and defender robots), fighting each other on various exotic planets. There is no opportunity for role playing.

Warbots (from McEwan Miniatures) is essentially a miniatures game. It provides rules for taking actual models and toys, measuring the object, and thereby determining its capacities. Then those capacities are related to other models and futuristic fighting hardware.

Mekton's earliest incarnation was a feeble attempt at both a board game and a role playing game. The box fell apart, the rules were scanty and the robot combat was mostly a matter of who shot and hit first. The initial dice roll determined who won.

A new edition has come out, and it makes all the difference in the world. The folks at R. Talsorian Games have taken my comments and those of a hundred others to heart. They have come out with a playable, likeable, far more complete game. Rather than find a better box, they have eliminated the box entirely — depending on shrink wrap to hold the book and its attendant maps and playing pieces together. As the recent experience of a lot other game companies shows, it is a reasonable gamble.

Mike Pondsmith and Mike Jones, the co-authors, have a lot of love and respect for the Japanese **anime** tradition. It shows everywhere.

Previously, building robots was a simple excercise in reading the rules. This has changed for the worse. The building process is now more complex. This complexity is the price to be paid for rules which allow for much more variety in robot design and a greater chance to properly duplicate the effects of Japanese animation.

The combat system has been totally reworked into a much more usable form (in fact, it slightly resembles my own **RuneQuest** and its various offshoots. But I certainly

don't mind that...). The opportunity for role playing is greater. It is now possible to play characters who are not just robot pilots, but actually have something to do on the ground.

The original rules firmly established **Mekton** on a specific fantasy world called Algol. This book allows for other worlds and times. It also provides much more material on Algol. With this completeness has come a certain drabness. Originally the game was very black and white with two warring factions, the good guys and the bad guys. Now everyone is wearing grey. More realistic? Perhaps. More in keeping with Japanese **anime** stories? Certainly. Less exciting? Yes. Sometimes the clear delimiation of black hats against white hats helps the feel of this kind of game. Oh well....

The new incarnation of **Mekton** does a much better job of capturing the feel of Japanese animation than either **Battletech** or **Warbots**. (It's definitely the benchmark that George MacDonald and I will have to surpass with **Robot Warriors**.)

ENTER THE DRAGON'S CLAW — HONOR

One feature (and some say, problem) of today's comics is the continued story and related subplots. The same villains show up time and again to further their long-term schemes while the poor heroes can only meet each threat as it comes. And wonder what is going to happen next. This is the product of having the same author write a series for many issues. In fact, the advent of a new writer on a book usually means a speedy tieup of loose ends and the introduction of a whole new set of sub-plots.

At Fantasy Games Unlimited, the major producer of supplements for super hero games, this phenomenon is starting to take hold. **Force** and its recent sequel **Assassin** are an example of a continuing plotline.

In the current item, the Organizer, main villain of **Organized Crime**, returns as the innocent focus of the activities of the Dragon's claw, a ninja group out to take over Yamashito Electronics from within. This scenario, like its predecessor, is by Ken Cliffe.

The scenario has lots of ninjas, double-dealing and general mayhem. There are wheels-within-wheels. The heroes can't be too sure whose side anyone is on. If they are the same heroes involved in the **Organized Crime** scenario, they might even go after the Organizer, who has nothing to do with the operation. If they do, they meet the Organizer's new hit man, a Terminator-like assassin called the Ebony Wolf (that's Terminator as in Slade Wilson, not Arnold Schwarzenegger).

Cliffe supplies a new group of mostly Japanese-based super-villains for the heroes to fight after they get tired of taking on ninjas. I get the feeling, though, that Cliffe prefers to pit heroes against agents and ninjas. Just as the Midnight Men, from his **Organized Crime** book, could be out of the scenario by the middle of the story line, these super-villains seem like an afterthought. They have no real place in the final confrontation with the criminal mastermind behind all the plotting.

Like several **Villains and Vigilantes** scenarios before it, this contains the modified article on converting V&V to **Champions** that George MacDonald and I did.

The scenario reads well. It is good adventure for those players with an Electra fixation who find lurking ninjas in every doorway.

PSI WORLD — UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

For those of you who missed a column or came in late, (shame on you!) **Psi World** involves a near-future reality in which psionic powers are coming to the fore and the "normal" population is nervous about it. The latest issues of **X-Men/X-Factor/X-Clones** give background on the basic plot idea. (And, of course, **Stan** came first. — Happy Hal)

This supplement is written by the Keith brothers — veteran **Traveller** writers who are moving on to other game systems in the never-ending search for a way to make a living writing games. They bring a certain thoroughness and perception to any sci fi based supplement they attempt along with a good appreciation of the eternal verities of the human condition.

What does that mean? Just that they have taken the basic premise of a minority of psis attempting to survive in a hostile society and applied it to an alternate Psi World, where the USA has been divided up into a bunch of autonomous states. Some are anti-psi while others are not. Our heroes can be psis or non-psis, but their basic job is to help oppressed psionics escape from the violently anti-psi Central States Confederacy to the Free State. There psis are encouraged.

Many parallels to the old anti-slavery Underground Railroad or the state of Jews in Nazi Germany (another era and area in which the Keith brothers excel in knowledge) are obvious. In short, a golden opportunity for players to be good guys fighting oppression and bigotry. What more could you ask for?

Actually, there are a lot of things, but the Keith's provide them, too. This is suspenseful stuff, with opportunity for last-minute rescues, daring penetrations into the heart of hostile territory and everything else that makes a good B movie worthwhile.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Battletech FASA Corporation, P.O. Box 6930, Chicago, IL 60680-6930
Villains and Vigilantes and **Psi World** Fantasy Games Unlimited, P.O. Box 182, Roslyn, NY 11576
DC Heroes Mayfair Games, Inc. P.O. Box 48539, Niles, IL 60648-0539
Mekton R. Talsorian Games, Inc., Box 2288, Aptos, CA 95001-2288

Steve Perrin created the Elfquest and Superworld games along with many other items.

STRIP SEARCH

BY RON GOULART

AFTER JIM'S ABRUPT DEPARTURE FOR PARTS UNKNOWN, LIL CALLS ON THE NAVAL COMMANDANT FOR SOME CLUE AS TO JIM'S WHEREABOUTS···
"I'M SORRY," SAYS THE OFFICER, "BUT MR. BRADLEY ASKED THAT HIS DESTINATION BE KEPT SECRET. HOWEVER, HE DID SAY HE WAS HOMESICK AND, THAT HE DIDN'T CARE WHO KNEW IT." "ADMIRAL," SAYS LIL, "YOU'RE A PEACH!"

THE STORY WAS WEAK, OVERLY WORDY, TOLD ALMOST ENTIRELY IN CAPTIONS WHEN THE STRIP BEGAN.

The 1930s was a decade when adventurers flourished on the comics pages. One of the most successful to come along back then was a handsome, humorless explorer and soldier of fortune known as Jungle Jim. He managed to stay in business for twenty years, branching out into other media and all-in-all doing very well for a Sunday-only character who'd started life as merely the upstairs boarder to the more flamboyant and compelling Flash Gordon.

The jungle had long been considered an exciting and adventure-filled place by consumers of popular entertainment. It didn't much matter where the jungle was—Africa, South America, the Malay Peninsula—just so long as there were fierce beasts, dense foliage and, for frosting, sometimes a lost city or a jungle goddess. H. Rider Haggard, who'd actually lived and worked in Africa, had started entertaining readers in the 1880s with his novels of hunting and exploring. Edgar Rice Burroughs, who'd never been near a jungle, was even more successful with his tales of Tarzan from the second decade of our century onward. The pulpwood fiction magazines, especially **Adventure, Blue Book** and **Argosy**, gave frequent lodging to big game hunters, intrepid explorers and jungle wildmen. The movies followed suit and by the time the Talkies were born in the late 1920s the pith helmet had been firmly established as an adventure prop.

ALONG CAME JIM

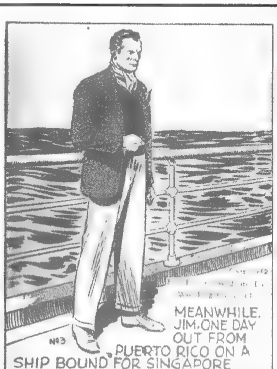
It seems likely that several movies of the early Thirties served as at least part of the inspiration for **Jungle Jim**. In 1931 MGM released **Trader Horn**, an adventure film based on the less than veracious autobiography of an African explorer and trader. The following year came **Tarzan the Ape Man**, introducing Johnny Weismuller as Burroughs' jungle man. Also shown in 1932 was **Bring 'Em Back Alive**, a documentary about big game hunter Frank Buck's daring exploits in the Malayan jungles.

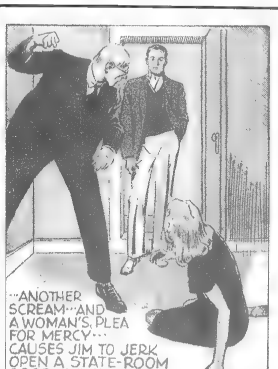
During the 1920s and 1930s many of the Sunday funnies were given a full page to stretch out in. From the middle 1920s, though, those full pages were often divided and cartoonists provided a second feature to run above their main strip. **Barney Google** started offering **Bunky** as well; **Thimble Theatre** offered **Sappo** in the topper position. When **Flash Gordon** came along in 1934 its top strip was **Jungle Jim**. Thus on one page King Features could compete with both **Buck Rogers** and **Tarzan**.

Jim Bradley, whose unusual outfit in his early years included pith helmet, riding breeches and holster, worked mostly in the Orient and in the jungles of places like Sumatra, Borneo, Malaya and on many of the thousands of islands of the South Seas. He was aided by a sidekick

JUNGLE JIM

BUT THE ARTWORK WAS SUPERB!


MEANWHILE, JIM ONE DAY OUT FROM PUERTO RICO ON A SHIP BOUND FOR SINGAPORE LEISURELY PACES THE DECK, WHEN SUDDENLY HE HEARS A SCREAM··


··ANOTHER SCREAM··AND A WOMAN'S PLEA FOR MERCY··· CAUSES JIM TO JERK OPEN A STATE-ROOM DOOR. "WHAT'S WRONG BUDDY? IS SHE PICKING ON YOU?"

named Kolu, who was initially his servant and called Jim "massah" or "tuan." Like Jim, the turbaned and barechested Kolu was an expert on jungle lore and tracking. During his second year in business Jungle Jim encountered Lilli de Ville, a femme fatale who reformed and became both "one of the best secret agents in China" and Jim's closest ladyfriend. Also inspired by the movies, Lil owed her looks to the type of shady lady Myrna Loy had been portraying on the screen in the early Thirties. Most of her original personality came directly from the Shanghai Lily character played in **Shanghai Express** in 1932 by Marlene Dietrich. Jim was wideranging in his talents and fairly soon he was being recruited for espionage assignments by the American government. "Your fame as a hunter and trapper is exceeded only by your reputation as a sort of jungle detective," the U.S. Consul in Shanghai told him when assigning him a job, "a crusader for right against wrong."

Jungle Jim was written by Don Moore, the former pulp magazine editor who also scripted **Flash Gordon**. His copy, which eventually appeared beneath the illustrations in sedate **Tarzan** page style, did not exactly sing and much of the prose seemed better suited to silent movie title cards. His sleazy villains addressed women captives with such lines as, "I'm going to crush you 'til you grovel at my feet." And the captive women pleaded, "Oh please—I beg of you—I implore you—Give me back my baby!—You couldn't be so cruel!" What saved the strip was the artwork.

JUNGLE REALISM

Alex Raymond was in his middle twenties and a graduate of the King Features bullpen. In January of 1934 his Sunday **Flash Gordon** and **Jungle Jim** began appearing as well as his daily **Secret Agent X-9**. Raymond was already a strip veteran, having worked as an assistant on **Tillie the Toiler** and **Blondie**. He'd learned to depict jungle action while ghosting **Tim Tyler's Luck**. Ambitious to become an illustrator eventually, Raymond was strongly influenced by such slick magazine artists as Matt Clark. On **Jungle Jim** he moved further away from the semicartoon style he'd been using on **Tim Tyler**. Another major influence on him was Austin Briggs, a regular illustrator for **Blue Book** in the Thirties, who became his assistant. Both Raymond and Briggs went in for a sort of heroic realism, a larger than life way of drawing adventure scenes that owed something to both magazine illustration and to the movies. Raymond became especially good at the dry brush technique then favored by many pulp illustrators. Up until this time most all newspaper strips were drawn chiefly in pen and he was one

ZOA, YOU OLD SON-OF-A GUN/ AND TO THINK I ALMOST PLUGGED YOU!
JUNGLE JIM---MY FRIEND/ I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE WE WIPED OUT CHO FANG!
A, KING OF THE TO BE STOPPED GUN /--------
LIFE; BUT FOR THE LIVES OF MY PEOPLE---
I'M GOING TO LEAVE MISS PETERS TO CARE FOR THE BABY--I'LL GO BACK AND SEE IF I CAN'T SAVE THE CHILD'S MOTHER

INSPIRED DIRECTLY BY THE MOVIES OF THE DAY, THE STRIP PORTRAYED A FANTASTIC BUT REALISTICALLY DRAWN SERIES OF ADVENTURES BY A WHITE ADVENTURER IN DARKEST AFRICA.

HELP!
LOOK, THAM JIM, SEEM IN WATER...HERE! IT'S THE HOLLOW TREE MAN I TOLD YOU ABOUT, BOB. A TREE?
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY DID YOU TRY TO KILL ME?
JUNGLE DRUMS... NOW WE STILL HAVE TO FIGHT LEOPARD MEN, TOO. OH, GOODIE!

THE STRIP CHANGED OVER THE YEARS.

YOU'LL CHANGE YOUR MIND, HAWKS, AFTER YOU STRANGLE IN THE NEXT GAS CHUTE OR TWICE. YOU'RE NEED ME CUZ I'M THE KING OF THE JUNGLE, LOMBO AWAY!
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR NOW. I DON'T WANT HIM TO HAVE TO DIE TWICE. NOT WITH HIS BACK LIKE THAT.

of the artists—along with Caniff and Sickles—who changed the look of the funnies. Raymond also got to be very good at drawing the human figure, both in action and repose. Since Jim's adventures were somewhat earthier, Raymond usually avoided the sometimes stiff tableaus that became a trademark of **Flash Gordon** in the jungle feature. At its best the **Jungle Jim** strip was a handsomely done visual equivalent of a good rousing pulp adventure yarn.

The size of the **Jungle Jim** topper fluctuated and by the late 1930s it was occupying a single tier, looking like a kingsize daily. The continuities became somewhat more sophisticated as the feature grew smaller. The masked villains and tormented ladies gave way to slightly more subtle characters. Jim, now doing even more work for the U.S. government, was just as likely to appear in slacks and a tweedy sports jacket as he was in sun helmet and jodphurs. Raymond had become increasingly interested in contemporary fashions—possibly as a reaction to the light opera costuming of his planet saga—and Lil and the other pretty young women in the strip began appearing in smart clothes. Once America entered the Second World War, Jim became a captain in the Army. He operated pretty much as before, still aided by the loyal Kolu, fighting the Japanese instead of river pirates, slavers and other freelance scoundrels.

WITH THE FBI

Eventually Jim, in civvies, was assigned to work with the FBI. Just as Terry never ran out of pirates of various sorts, Jim had always found plenty of jungles in which to ply his trade. By 1944, however, he'd left the foliage behind and was to be found in such urban settings as Washington, DC. Before he left the strip in the spring of that year, Raymond did some very impressive work. If Jim had donned a pair of glasses, the strips could've served as tryouts for **Rip Kirby**. Lil and Jim part for awhile, because she's enlisted in the Marines. Raymond becomes a Marine, too, and left the drawing board for the next two years.

After his departure, Austin Briggs, his onetime assistant and the artist on the daily **Flash Gordon** strip that ran in the early 1940s, assumed the drawing of the **Flash** Sunday page. Since Briggs intended eventually to get back into magazine illustration, he never signed his work from this period. That, and the lack of visual acuity on the part of some historians, has led to Briggs' being credited with taking over **Jungle Jim** as well in several comics histories and at least one encyclopedia. He didn't. The artist who did the strip next was an only moderately gifted man named John Mayo. In 1958 yet another artist was given the feature and Jim entered the final phase of his career.

BACK TO THE WOODS

Paul Norris, originally a protege of Milton Caniff, had worked in comic books in the early Forties—co-creating Aquaman and drawing Sandman—and also drew a newspaper strip titled **Vic Jordan**, about guerilla activities in wartorn Europe. After getting out of the service he worked in the King Features bullpen, ghosting **Secret Agent X-9** and working on comic book versions of **Flash Gordon** and **Perry Mason**. He had a style that was an effective variation of Caniff's. Norris improved the look of **Jungle Jim** from what it had been for the past few sad years and took it away from the Raymond camp.

Jim, who'd long since ceased to be a neighbor of Flash's, was restored in 1949 to a two-tier Sunday strip again. Don Moore was, at long, last, given credit for perpetrating the copy. Once the war ended Jim had gone back to the woods. He spent the rest of his years exploring the jungle, contending with stubborn old scientists, headstrong heiresses and traitorous guides. The strip, after a two decade trek, was retired in the middle 1950s. CF

Ron Goulart is the co-creator of the Star Hawks comic strip, author of award-winning science fiction, mystery and western stories, writer of over 130 novels and a comic book scripter

SILVER AGE

BY WILL MURRAY

I wish I could claim that my affection for Charlton Comics' early Sixties monster tiffe, **Gorgo**, was because most of its issues were illustrated by one of my favorite comic artists, Steve Ditko. It's a great reason, certainly, but not the chief one!

As it happens, **Gorgo** was the first film I ever saw at my local neighborhood theater, the longago pulverized Rialto. I remember it as if it were yesterday, but in fact it was 1962. Or was it '61? No matter. Suffice it to say that I was about 7 or 8 when I sat quietly in the darkened auditorium for the first time while a giant green lizard terrorized the North Sea before my innocent eyes.

It may be just my memory making this up, but getting off the bus later that day, I wandered into the local Smoke Shop to browse through that week's comics.

And there was **Gorgo**.

Whether it was in fact the same day or not doesn't matter much. **Gorgo** was there and I bought it!

LITTLE(?) LOST GORGO

The King brothers film enjoyed decent box office in those days apparently because of a literate script and an unusual plot wrinkle—the big bad monster, Gorgo, turned out to be a lost waif. His mother, who was the *real* big bad monster, showed up at the last half of the film to rescue her babe and crush the assorted human insects who had captured him in hopes of exhibiting him, King Kong style, in London.

The first issue of **Gorgo** adapted the film, Steve Ditko did the art work. I imagine the script was by Joe Gill, one of Charlton's chief writers and a minimalist scripter if ever one lived. Gill never wrote a word balloon when a caption would suffice. And he wrote as few captions as he could. Of course when your star—and his mother—happen not to speak in any accepted sense of the term, your dialogue options are noticably restricted. Still, I notice a similar approach to scripting Gill's other work, so Gorgo can't be entirely to blame.

But what was Gorgo? Imagine a Tyranosaurus Rex crossed with a sea monkey. Or better yet, take Godzilla, add some lizardlike fins and frills, and you have an excellent mental picture. Gorgo was really, after all, a second-rate Godzilla.

But Godzilla didn't have his own comic book then. Or Steve Ditko.

And the latter is undeniably the key to the appeal **Gorgo** still has for certain collectors. I'd swear that if you made a piece of French toast the hero and provided a coherant script, Steve Ditko would not only make it a comic book, but an entertaining comic book! The man is a genius.

He took Joe Gill's rather pedestrian scripts and transmuted them into something captivating. You wouldn't think that you could milk much interest out of the continuing adventures of a giant lizard and his mommy, but Steve Ditko did. He also pulled off some interesting human interest stories, liberally laced with humor. Other monsters and some notable aliens from *Out There* contributed to **Gorgo's** appeal.

FANTASTIC GIANTS

GLARED AT THEM; HATRED BLAZING IN HIS EYES/ THEN, HE RAISED HIS VOICE IN A BELLOW THAT CRACKED GLASS AND BENT METAL IN THE ALIENS'S SHIPS/
GRROOWL
AND...
A LONG WAY SO...
14

My favorite issue of **Gorgo** explains it all. It was actually a spinoff title, **The Return of Gorgo**. In that one, a giant grey frog-faced alien, Koorli, from Corpusiii, (that's how Gill spelled them!) is scouting our world in anticipation of leading your typical comic book invasion from outer space. Dr. Emory Mason, a zoologist of note, is diving off the coast of China with his beautiful assistant, Hilda Jackson, in hopes of locating Gorgo. Gorgo and his mom are minding their own business when the Red Chinese drop a nuclear bomb on them.

Being comic book monsters, they shrug off the effects of the blast with only minor burns, and take again to the sea, where they feed on their favorite meal—giant pink squid. While Dr. Mason is blithely filming their eating habits, Koorli decides to show off. He grabs Mason and prepares to crush his diving suit between his oversized hands.

Curious, Gorgo reaches out and takes Koorli in his claws Mason retreats to the surface, to join his assistant, whom he suddenly realizes he loves. Koorli floats away, crushed by the power of Gorgo's curious grasp. End of invasion.

If the above plot sounds dull to you, you're right. It was dull. But Ditko's artistic magic made it sing.

This issue was typical of the formula. Gorgo and his mother were always shown happily feeding on squid, octopi or killer whales, content with their lives, until mankind in the form of the military-industrial complex did something unfriendly like bomb or capture them. Invariably there was a couple having romantic difficulties somewhere. Somehow, Gorgo's actions always led to the destruction of the bad guys, the uniting of the lovers, and a happy ending.

CHARLTON & MONSTERS

You'd think a weak formula like that would mean sudden death, but back in the early Sixties, monsters were the biggest thing in comics—in more ways than one! Inspired by Grade B Fifties films such as **Godzilla** and **Varan the Unbelievable**, gigantic skyscraper-crushing monsters were the rage. Marvel and DC picked up on the trend almost immediately—especially Marvel, where Stan Lee scripted a

ton of giant monster yarns for Jack Kirby to render. For some reason, Kirby got all the giants. Ditko was left with the assorted flying saucer, time travel and haunted house backup pieces. So it was nice to see Ditko get to strut his stuff with a giant lizard of his own. Nor was that all. **Gorgo** was actually the second of Charlton's giant monster titles.

Back in 1960, Charlton Comics was a wasteland of war, western and hot-rod comics. The only bright spots were the occasional Steve Ditko fantasy stories that appeared in **Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds**, **Unusual Tales** and **Space War**. Giant monsters didn't seem to find a place in any of those titles.

Charlton was always a kind of comic book backwater. They operated out of Derby, Connecticut in their own building, the Charlton Building. Unlike other comics companies, who maintained New York City editorial offices and shipped their comics to Sparta, Illinois for printing, Charlton printed their own comics on their very own in-house presses. The results were not always as professional as those of other companies, because those presses were also used for crossword puzzle books and their now-defunct paperback book line.

ONE BIG APE—KONGA

It was Charlton's paperback line which, ironically, birthed the trio of monster titles they released in the early Sixties. It all started with the novelizaiton of American International's **Konga**, which Charlton released in 1960 under its Monarch Books imprint. Konga might be called the poor man's King Kong, except I think Mighty Joe Young has a lock on that distinction.

No matter. Konga was a giant black ape. He *had* been a tiny monkey, the sacred ape of the tribe of giant African natives, until Dr. Charles Decker parachuted in. Decker was investigating the giant plants which were the reason the tribe members routinely grew to heights of twelve feet. Konga took a fancy to Decker, so the tribe willingly shared the growth-inducing seeds with the bearded scientist.

Returning to London, Dr. Decker injects Konga with his growth extract, causing Konga to shoot up to gorilla size. A side effect of the process created a mental link between Decker and the ape. Whenever Decker thinks bad thoughts about one of his colleagues—who are denouncing his ex-

periments as chicanery—Konga picks up on his wavelength, and goes after the offending party. Soon scientists are being found mauled all over London. Decker is puzzled, but his experiments continue. Konga keeps growing. By the time Decker realizes that Konga is the murdering marauder, the ape is the size of an office building.

R.A.F. jets quickly snuff out the poor simian's life. Decker and his wife perish amid the carnage.

Such was the plot of the film, its novelization and a one-shot **Konga** comic book Charlton released in 1960.

I don't know what stroke of inspiration prompted the folks at Charlton to turn Konga into a comic. Months later when the sales figures came in they were undoubtedly astonished to find that the big ape had garnered big sales. They were learning something that editor Julius Schwartz had just discovered over at DC: namely that monkeys sell comic books. Putting an ape on a comic cover somehow meant an automatic sales boost. It probably didn't hurt that the artist responsible for the first issue was no less than Charlton mainstay Steve Ditko.

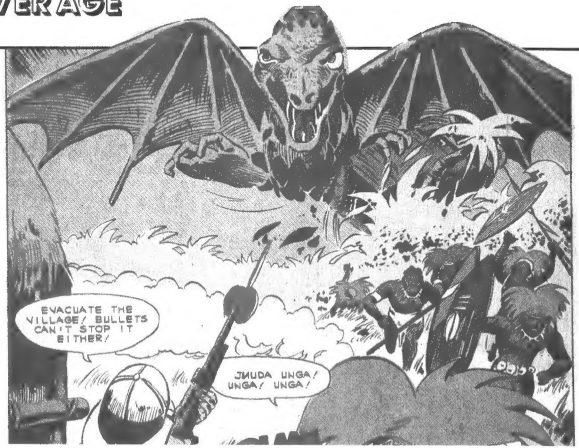
Charlton obviously had no plans for Konga beyond that one-shot comic. But about a year later, a second issue appeared, sporting art by Nicholas and Alascia (whoever they were) and a cover by Dick Giordano.

The story "Return of Konga," was a bit misleading. After Decker's death, his assistant, Sandra, and her fiancee Bob, are picking up the pieces when they discover Decker's notes. While in Australia on their honeymoon, they adopt a monkey whom Sandra sentimentally names Konga.

You can guess what happens after that. They inject him with Decker's extract. Konga becomes a giant. But this Konga is gentler, more friendly. However, his size causes problems. The military hounds him into running away to a volcanic island where, after tussling with some stray dinosaurs, Konga is caught in a volcanic eruption. The last sight Bob and Sandra have of him is the giant ape's paw slipping into the sea.

The end of Konga? Hardly. In the third issue Steve Ditko returned as artist and picked up the story thread when it left off. As Sandra and Bob wing away from the sinking island, trouble in the form of a giant sea serpent, some

SILVER AGE



crooked traders, a native tribe and a very active Konga, emerging from the sea to become the new god of the South Seas, rapidly mix. Part of the mixture are a Sandra-and-Boblike couple who are having romantic problems. It would practically become formula that in most issues of **Konga**, the big black ape would serve as a catalyst for some poor romantic couple trying to get their act together.

APE & LIZARD

It was the identical formula that scripter Gill used on **Gorgo**, which was the second Monarch novelization-turned-comic book. The first issue of **Gorgo** premiered with a May, 1961 cover date—just a few months before they brought back **Konga**.

Konga and Gorgo led curiously parallel lives. Both lasted exactly 23 issues, ending late in 1965. They were so popular that they gave birth to identical spinoff titles, **Konga's Revenge** and **Gorgo's Revenge**. They were simply regular issues of both comics given different titles and new numbering. With the second issues, they became **The Return of Konga** and **The Return of Gorgo**.

Steve Ditko continued drawing both titles. He didn't do every issue but he drew a healthy percent of both. As each series went on, the famous Ditko brand of humor came increasingly to the surface. Joe Gill's scripts backed up that approach. In one issue of **Konga**, the big ape spent much of the issue trapped up to his neck in snow. It took Sandra and Bob (their last names were never revealed) to rescue him.

Gorgo got equally silly, as in the story entitled "Gorgo's Triumph," in which a Cecil B. DeMille-style Hollywood director takes his troupe to a tropical island to film **Gorgo's Revenge**. His only problem was getting Gorgo to cooperate. It was broad farce and a far cry from the deadly serious first issue. But it all worked out in the end. The film was made, and a has-been actor and his girlfriend are reunited.

There were serious issues of both **Konga** and **Gorgo**, too. In "The Land of Frozen Giants" (**Konga** 8), the poor dumb brute is freezing his hairy hide off in Antarctica, where he's taken refuge after being H-bombed in an earlier issue. Here Konga is a sympathetic, almost human creature. He stumbles upon a lost land inhabited by dinosaurs, where you'd think he could fit in. Not so. Konga spends half the issue punching out Tyrannosaurs and assorted reptiles. In the end, he finds himself a nice tropical island where he can soak up the sun in peace.

Gorgo, too, had a dinosaur issue, "The Land That Time Forgot." Professor Carl Engstrom and his wife and daughter venture into the heart of Africa to investigate reports of dinosaur sightings. A native attack kills his wife,

and his daughter vanishes into the jungles. Years later, now an old man, Engstrom returns in quest of his daughter. He finds she's now the white god of the natives. But because she can't protect them from marauding Tyrannosaurs, they stake her as a sacrifice.

Gorgo rescues her when he gets into a lizard-fight with several Tyrannosaurus Rex. Father and daughter are reunited. The ending was great. Gorgo was outnumbered by three of the lizards—until his mother showed up. She dwarfed them all, throwing Tyrannosaurs left and right.

Like Gorgo, Konga also fought assorted giant alien menaces from outer space. Konga's finest hour was the Ditko-drawn "Konga Meets the Creatures from Beyond Space" in issue number 7. His island hideaway is invaded by giant vegetable men—classic Ditko aliens who look like Methuselah carved from dried sweet potatoes. Konga, recognizing they are much bigger than pesky humans, attempts to make friends. They ray blast him. Konga retreats to nurse his wounds. He only wants to be left alone. But the vegetable men don't know when to leave well enough alone and rig a trap—a camouflaged pit. It's at that point that Konga *really* gets mad! When he's done the vegetable men and their giant saucer are sweet potato pie.

The essence of both these titles was of two giant, persecuted brutes trying to find a place in a harsh world. And it worked. Why not? It was the same approach that turned Marvel's struggling Hulk character into a comic book megastar.

SANS DITKO—DISASTER!

After 1963, Ditko was busy launching Spider-Man and Dr. Strange over at Marvel, so he left both titles to the capable but less enthralling art team of Montes and Bache. It would figure that Charlton would need *two* artists to fill Ditko's shoes. Sales, I imagine, plummeted.

One title Ditko had nothing to do with was **Reptilicus**. It was the weakest of the trio. Reptilicus was a giant flying lizard, sort of a sea serpent in the sky. Reptilicus was huge, scaley and possessed batlike wings, as well as fearsome talons. He starred in an American International Picture which Monarch novelized in 1961 and turned into a comic book in 1962.

Reptilicus came into being when a mining drill brought a hunk of reptilian flesh to the surface in Lapland. The saurian remnant grew of its own volition, eventually becoming the green winged Reptilicus. The lizard terrorized Scandanavia until it was narcotized by a bazooka shell. The authorities destroyed Reptilicus—but overlooked one tiny piece of hide.

That piece grew and reformed in the second issue. Reptilicus tangled with an African tribe. Unlike Gorgo or Konga, Reptilicus was truly a menace, eating everything in sight and fully capable of killing any human who got in his—its?—way. The natives lure him into a swamp, where he sinks from sight. For good?

That depends on how one interprets the third issue, which was retitled **Reptisaurus** for reasons that would be interesting to know. Although identical in every way to Reptilicus, Reptisaurus was colored bright red instead of the more lizardlike green of his predecessor. Evidently, whoever owned the rights to Reptilicus balked at the comic book version, and forced Charlton to hastily rework and recolor that third issue.

In the fourth issue, Reptisaurus is terrorizing the entire world, flying from continent to continent in answer to some distant call. Finally, in the Florida everglades, he comes face to face with another red flying lizard! After gargantuan battles, the two end up billing and cooing. Reptisaurus had found his mate! From that point on, it would be a team book.

Reptisaurus continued for eight boring issues, and one guest appearance in **Gorgo**. It's amazing it lasted that long. The art, not always signed, was putrid. The team of Molno and Alascia executed many of them—and I do mean executed.

FANTASTIC GIANTS

After the monster trend had abated, Charlton released what I think is their only annual ever, **Fantastic Giants**. Picking up **Konga's** old numbering, it reprinted the first Konga and Gorgo adventures, as well as two new Steve Ditko stories. It was an all-Ditko extravaganza! It was also a one-shot.

Charlton's fantastic giants were finished. Monsters were long out of vogue. But there was one curious sequel to their story.

In the last issue of **The Fightin' 5**, one of Charlton's hero titles, the 5 come to the aid of a research submarine in trouble. It had been hijacked by the despicable Dr. Acquilla. When the sub fires a torpedo, it goes astray and lands at the bottom of an ocean abyss where it awakens a sleeping green creature. A creature who is, scale for scale, a virtual duplicate of Gorgo! Or is it his mother?

Either way, throughout this adventure, scripter Joe Gill never mentions the monster's name. But between him and the art team of Montes and Bache, there can hardly be any doubt but that this is one of the two stars of the defunct **Gorgo**.

The story ends happily. The sub is rescued. Acquilla is captured. And to get rid of Gorgo, one of the 5 feeds him an explosive charge. It doesn't hurt him, but Gorgo limps away with a severe case of the hiccups.

It was an inglorious finale for one of my favorite monsters. But I'm sure that somewhere in one of the seven seas a giant green lizard and her offspring are contentedly swimming in search of pink squid and a place where man does not dwell. CF

Will Murray writes Doc Savage for National Public Radio, ghosts a leading men's adventure paperback series and is the author of Duende: The History of the Shadow.

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